John Owen

1908

AN ACCOUNT OF Reason & Faith: In RELATION to the MYSTERIES OF CHRISTIANITY.

By JOHN NORRIS, *M. A.* *Rector of* Bemerton *near* Sarum.

Holding Faith, and a good Conscience; which some having put away, Concerning Faith have made Ship-wrack. 1 Tim. 1. 19.

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To the Right Honourable Henry *Lord of* Colerane.

My Lord,

YOur Lordſhips Learning and Knowledge in Matters of Religion, and Sincerity in the Belief and Profeſſion of its Sacred Articles are both ſo well known, that I cannot be ſuppoſed to Preſent this Book to your Lordſhip with a Deſign to inſtruct you in the Former, or to Settle and Confirm you in the Latter. There are indeed but too many in the World to whom it may be neceſſary upon thoſe Accounts, but all that I intend in refe-

rence to your Lordſhip by it is only to expreſs my Reverence and Reſpect for your great Worth and Goodneſs, and my grateful Acknowledgments for that particular Share and Intereſt I have had in your Favours.

Which give me further Occaſion to hope that you will be as kind to the Book as you have been to the Author, and that as you were pleas'd to incourage the Undertaking, ſo you will now favour the Performance, which with all deference and Submiſſion is humbly preſented to your Lordſhip by

My Lord,

Your Lordſhips moſt Obliged and very humble Servant,

J. Norris.

THE

THE PREFACE.

Controverſies of Religion, and particularly this, have been managed of late with that Intemperance of Paſſion and Indecency of Language, after ſuch a Rude Bear-Garden *way, ſo much more like Duelling or Prizing than Diſputing, that the more good Natured and better Bred part of the World are grown almoſt Sick of them and Prejudic'd againſt them, not being able to ſee Men Cut and Slaſh and draw Blood from one another after ſuch an inhuman manner only to vent their own Spleen, and make diverſion for the Savage and brutalized Rabble, without ſome troubleſom reſentments*

of Pity and Diſplacency. And truly 'tis hard for a Man to read ſome certain things of this Character without being diſturb'd, and growing out of humour upon't, and being even out of Conceit with Mankind, ſuch an Idea do they raiſe of the Malignity of Human Nature, and ſo do they ruffle and Chagrine the Mind of the Reader: From which impreſſions he will hardly recover himſelf till he meets with ſome Book or other of a Contrary Spirit (whereof the Biſhop of London-Derry's Excellent Diſcourſe of the Inventions of Men in the Worſhip of God is a very eminent Inſtance) which may ſerve to recompoſe the One, and give him a better Opinion of the Other.

I have endeavour'd in the Management of the preſent Argument to uſe ſuch Chriſtian Temper and Moderation

ration as becomes the Search of Truth, and may argue a Mind Concern'd only for the finding it. For of all the ill-ſorted things in Nature I think it the moſt improper and diſagreeable, to reaſon in a Paſſion, eſpecially when 'tis in defence of that Religion which neither needs it nor allows it. And therefore laying aſide all Anger and Diſaffection (which even for the advantage of well reaſoning ought to be laid aſide) I have ſet my Self to obſerve the Laws of Decency as well as thoſe of good Diſcourſe, to Conſider things as they really are in their own Natures, to repreſent them as I find them with all Calmneſs and Sedateneſs, to regard nothing but the pure Merits of the Cauſe, and to treat that Party of Men I write againſt with that Candour and Reſpect as may the better diſpoſe them to lend Attention to

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my Arguments, Conſidering it as one of the Principal Rules of the Art of Perſwaſion to gain upon the Affections of Men in order to the Conviction of their Judgments. And I do not know that I am guilty of any incivility towards the Men I deal with, unleſs it be that of Contradicting *them. Wherein as they are even with me, ſo I hope they will not be leſs ſo in the other part, but will treat me with the like return of Civility and good Temper, in Caſe they ſhall think fit to make any.*

The Occaſion of this undertaking was a Certain late Book call'd Chriſtianity Not Myſterious, *one of the moſt Bold, daring and irreverent pieces of Defiance to the Myſteries of the Chriſtian Religion that even* this *Licentious* Age *has produced, and which has been ſup-*

poſed

poſed to have done great Battery and Execution upon them, and to be indeed a very ſhrewd and notable Performance even by people of competent Senſe and Learning, not excluding the Author himſelf who to ſhew his good Opinion both of his Cauſe and of his Management of it, has ſince publiſh'd a Second Edition of his Book, with inlargements, *and with his* Name. *To which I thought once to have return'd a direct and Formal* Anſwer *by way of Solution of his Objections, till upon further Conſideration I judg'd it better to give an* Abſolute Account *of the Poſitive Side of the Queſtion; and after having laid ſuch grounds in it as might be made uſe of for the Confutation of his Book, to make a ſhort* Application *of them in a few Strictures upon it at the End of Mine. But after I had laid thoſe*

Grounds

Grounds in the Abſolute part, I found the Application of them was ſo eaſie to the Author's Objections, that they might as well be made by my Reader, who might with ſuch readineſs out of the Principles here eſtabliſh'd form an Anſwer to all that deſerves one in that Book, that I thought there was no need of inlarging the Bulk of mine upon that account. Which accordingly tho' I do not call by the Name of an Anſwer to Chriſtianity Not Myſterious, *I cannot but reckon to have all the Subſtance (though not the Formality) of a Reply to that Treatiſe, it being much the ſame thing in effect either to unlock a door for a Man, or to put into his hands a* Key *that will.*

I write neither for Favour nor for Preferment, but only to ſerve the Cauſe of Chriſtianity (for ſo I call that

that of its Myſteries) *and the intereſt of that Church which is ſo great a Friend to it and Maintainer of it according to its pureſt and moſt Primitive State of Apoſtolical and Evangelic Perfection. Of whoſe Communion 'tis my Happineſs to be a Member, my Glory to be a Prieſt, and that I had better* Abilities *to do her Service, my higheſt* Ambition. *However ſuch as they are I humbly devote and imploy them to that purpoſe, as I do this and all other my Labours. I hope what I have written may do ſome Service to the Cauſe whoſe Defence it Undertakes, and if it does, I ſhall not much regard the reſentments of any Deſigning or not ſo well affected Perſons, Great or Little, whoſe diſpleaſure it may provoke, tho' I have taken all due Care not to give any body any reaſonable Offence.*

And

And so I Commit the following Papers to the attentive Perusal of the Candid and Considerate Reader, and to the Blessing of God.

THE

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The

The Introduction.

1. AMong the various Conjectures Men of a Prophetic Spirit have fall'n into Concerning the laſt events, we have had * this Opinion not long ſince advanc'd for one, that as God formerly by rejecting the *Jews* made way for the *Gentiles*, ſo in the latter days he will in like manner by rejecting the *Gentiles* make way for the *Jews* to enter into the Chriſtian Church. That the ſtate of Chriſtianity being become intirely Corrupt, and all over *Antichriſtianiz'd*, the Firſt of thoſe Viols of the Divine Wrath that are to exterminate the Wicked, and uſher in the Terrours of the Great Day, ſhall fall upon the Chriſtian World, that *Chriſtendom* ſhall be utterly diſſolv'd, broken in pieces, and deſtroy'd, and that the *Jews* ſhall be replaced and re eſtabliſh'd upon its Ruins. And to render it Worthy of ſo Sore a Calamity, that the generality of its Profeſſors ſhall not only greatly depart from the Primitive Power of the Evangelic Spirit, by Apoſtatizing from

* *See Mrs. Bourignon's Works at large particularly* Vol. 7. Part 2d. pag. 193. *As alſo Mr.* Poiret's *Oeconomie Divine* Vol. 5. P. 338.

the Purity and Perfection of both Chriſtian Faith and Life (which we have already ſeen come to paſs) but ſhall even lay down their Holy Profeſſion, renounce their very Faith and Religion, and turn Infidels. Upon the latter part of which Opinion thoſe Words of our Saviour ſeem to caſt a very ſuſpicious Aſpect, *VVhen the Son of Man cometh, ſhall he find Faith upon the Earth?* As upon the Former do alſo thoſe words of St. *Paul, Thou wilt ſay then, The Branches were broken off, that I might be graffed in. VVell; becauſe of unbelief they were broken off, and thou ſtandeſt by Faith. Be not high-minded, but fear. For if God ſpared not the Natural Branches, take heed leſt he alſo ſpare not thee. Behold therefore the Goodneſs and Severity of God: On them which fell, Severity; but towards thee, Goodneſs, if thou continue in his Goodneſs. Otherwiſe thou alſo ſhalt be cut off*: that is, as a dead, wither'd and unfruitful Branch, as were the *Jews* for the ſame Reaſon before, and as our Saviour tells us every unfruitful Branch ſhall be.

Luk. 18. 8.

Rom. 11. 19, 20, 21, 22.

Joh. 15. 2.

2. And truly if one were to judge of theſe Mens Opinion by the preſent face and ſtate of things, one would

would be inclined to think it true, and that they had the right *Key* of Prophecy in their hands. For sure by all Signs and Appearances, the Course of the World seems to drive this way; and if there be such a Fatal Revolution to come, no doubt but that we are with large steps hastening to it. For how are the Vitals of Religion continually struck at, the Foundations of it unsettled and undermined, its venerable Articles disputed and ridiculed, and by what a slender thread does Christianity hang! The great Complaint for a long while has been of the Decay of Christian Piety, and the Universal Corruption of Manners. But now our Religion is corrupted as well as our Manners, and we every day make shipwrack of our *Faith* as well as of a good *Conscience*. So that we have now fill'd our measure, and are every way ripe for Destruction. Some deny all Reveal'd Religion, and consequently the Christian; others allowing the Divinity of the Religion deny that of its Author, together with the Doctrines of the Trinity, Incarnation and Satisfaction; others again owning his Divi-

nity deny the neceſſity of Believing it; others again granting that, and the other Points, deny the neceſſity of his Satisfaction, which is not only reſolv'd into mere *Prudential* Reaſons (as formerly) inſtead of being grounded upon the *Eſſential Order* and *Juſtice* of God, but is brought down ſo low of late as to be made an Accommodation and Condeſcenſion to, and a gracious Compliance with the common Weakneſſes and Prejudices of Mankind. Thus is the Chriſtian Religion ſo mangled and diſmember'd by ſome, and ſo odly and inſidiouſly repreſented by others, that between them both the general Faith of the thing is indanger'd, and a ready way prepared to *Scepticiſm* and *Infidelity*.

3. Not that I think it ought to be any juſt matter of Scandal to any conſidering Chriſtians, or Prejudice to their Holy Religion to ſee ſo many Corruptions of it, and Apoſtacies and Revoltings from it, ſince this is no more than what the Holy Spirit of God has often forewarn'd us ſhall come to paſs in the latter days; wherein we are expreſly told, that perillous times ſhall come, and

that

that Men ſhall reſiſt the Truth, be proud and high-minded, of corrupt minds, and reprobate concerning the Faith. And moreover that they ſhall privily bring in damnable Hereſies, even denying the Lord that bought them. This therefore I ſay ought in reaſon to be no matter of ſcandal to any Chriſtians. And ſo neither ought the poor, humble, ſuffering condition of Jeſus Chriſt to have been any to the *Jews*, ſince this alſo was plainly foretold of the Meſſias, and made a notable part of his Character. And yet we find that the Croſs of Chriſt was a ſtumbling-block to the *Jews*, and ſo no doubt are the preſent ſufferings, I may ſay *Crucifixion*, of his Religion to many Chriſtians; the generality of which meaſure the certainty of their Faith by the firmneſs and conſtancy of its Profeſſors, and are apt more to ſtagger and take offence at the untoward appearance of any Event, than to be confirm'd in their belief from its agreement with Antient Prophecies. 2 Tim. 3. 2 Pet. 2.

4. In the mean time what do thoſe *without* think of us! Particularly the *Heathens*, among whom no doubt

there are ſome that neither want Intelligence nor Curioſity to acquaint themſelves with the preſent ſtate of *Chriſtendom*. What a confirmation muſt it be to theſe Men in their Infidelity, to ſee Chriſtians grow weary of their own Religion, and willing to part with thoſe great and weighty Articles of it for which the holy Martyrs ſhed their Blood, and which could not be extorted from them by all the might and power of *their* cruel Emperours. Can it be expected that theſe Men ſhould embrace a Religion which they ſee thus continually deſerted by its own Diſciples! Or rather inſtead of converting themſelves to Chriſtianity will they not look every day when the Chriſtians ſhall come over to *them!* For truly this ſeems to be the ſtate of the Chriſtian World at this time. We are poſting as faſt as we can into Heatheniſm, and ſtand even upon the brink of Infidelity. The great Articles of our Religion are giving up every day, and when Men have parted with theſe, we are very much beholden to them if they retain any of the reſt, there being nothing in Chriſtianity conſiderable enough,

when

when the great Myſteries of the Trinity, Incarnation, *&c.* are taken away, to make it appear an Inſtitution worthy of God, or to challenge the Aſſent of any thinking and conſidering Man. But why do I talk of running into Heatheniſm? I am afraid we are tending further. For as from a *Socinian* 'tis eaſie to commence a *Deiſt*; ſo he that is once a *Deiſt* is in a hopeful way to be an *Atheiſt* whenever he pleaſe.

5. I do not ſpeak theſe things out of a Spirit of Peeviſhneſs and Diſſatisfaction, as ſome who being full of a Querulous Splenetick Humour, and knowing not how better to diſpoſe of it to their eaſe, give it vent upon the *Times*, of which they are always complaining right or wrong. No, the deplorable and dangerous ſtate of Chriſtianity, and the too viſible growth of *Socinianiſm* and *Deiſm* among us extort theſe Reflections from me, and have given me many a troubleſome and uneaſie Thought in my private Retirements. For my Satisfaction under which, my beſt *Salvo* has been to conſider that God governs the World, and that Jeſus Chriſt, who is the Head of his

Church, will preſerve it from all the Powers of Earth, and even from the Gates of Hell. And that tho' now he ſeems to be aſleep in this Sacred Veſſel while the Tempeſt rages, and the Waves beat againſt it, and almoſt cover it, yet 'tis to be hoped he will awake, and rebuke the Winds and the Sea, and make all calm and quiet again. However in the mean time 'tis fit the Mariners ſhould work, and neglect the uſe of no means that are neceſſary to the ſafety of their Ship; ſome by Writing, others by private Diſcourſe, and all by Prayers and a good Life.

6. But now whereas all Rational Method of Cure is founded upon the knowledge of the Cauſe of the Diſtemper, he that would contribute any thing to the ſtopping this Contagion of *Religious Scepticiſm*, that now reigns among us, ought in the firſt place to conſider the Reaſon of it, what it is that makes Men ſo diſpoſed to waver in their Religion, and ſo ready to part with the great Articles and Myſteries of it. Now to this purpoſe I call to mind a very conſiderable Obſervation of *Deſcartes* concerning Atheiſm, which I take

to

to be equally applicable to Infidelity, particularly to this of the Myſteries of the Chriſtian Faith: The Obſervation is this, "That thoſe things "which are commonly alledged by "Atheiſts to impugne the Exiſtence "of God, do all turn upon this, that "either we attribute ſome Humane "Affection to God, or elſe arrogate ſo "great force and penetration to our "own minds as to go about to com-"prehend and determine what God "can, and ought to do. So that if "we would but carry about us this "Thought, that our Minds are to be "conſider'd as Finite, but God as In-"comprehenſible and Infinite, there "would be no further difficulty in "any of their Objections. Thus that very Acute and Judicious Perſon concerning the Grounds of Atheiſm. And in like manner I think it may be ſaid of Infidelity as to the Myſteries of Chriſtianity, That the great Reaſon why ſo many that call themſelves Chriſtians do ſo obſtinately cavil at them and diſpute them, is, that either they think too meanly of God, or too highly of themſelves; that either they aſcribe ſomething Humane to *his* Nature, or ſomething

In the Preface to his Metaphyſical Meditat.

thing Divine to their *own*; that either they ſet too narrow limits to the Divine Power and Greatneſs, or carry out too far thoſe of their own underſtandings; in one word, that either they *Humanize* God, or *Deify* themſelves and their own Rational Abilities.

7. And they confeſs in effect as much themſelves. For the Reaſon that theſe Men commonly give out and pretend for their not allowing the Myſteries of the Chriſtian Religion any room in their Creed, is, that they are above the reach of their Underſtandings. They cannot comprehend them, or conceive how they can be, and therefore will not believe them; having fix'd it as a Law in the general to believe nothing but what they can comprehend. But now where does the Ground of this Conſequence reſt at laſt, or upon what Principle does it ultimately depend? How comes the Incomprehenſibility of a Point of Faith to be a preſumption againſt it; why is its being above their Reaſon an Argument that it is not true? Why I ſay, but only becauſe in the firſt place they attribute ſo much to their Reaſon

Reaſon (at leaſt by a Confuſe Sentiment) as to preſume it to be the Meaſure and Standard of all Truth, and that nothing that is True can really be above it. Here I ſay the ſtreſs of the matter will reſt at laſt. For ſhould the Argument of theſe Men be reduced to a Syllogiſtical Form, it muſt neceſſarily proceed thus,

Whatever is above our Reaſon is not to be believ'd as true;
But the Reputed Myſteries of Chriſtianity are above our Reaſon:
Therefore the Reputed Myſteries of Chriſtianity are not to be believ'd as true.

Now the only conteſtable Propoſition in this Syllogiſm is the Major, which can be prov'd by no other Principle than this, That our Reaſon is the Meaſure of all Truth, and whoſe Proof muſt be in this Form,

Whatever is above the Meaſure of all Truth is not to be believ'd as true;
But our Reaſon is the Meaſure of all Truth:
Therefore whatever is above our Reaſon is not to be believ'd as true.

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By this Analyſis of their Argument into its Principle, it is plain, that this their Reaſon of disbelieving the Myſteries of the Chriſtian Religion, *viz. Becauſe they are above their Reaſon*, does at laſt reſolve into this, *That their Reaſon is the Meaſure of all Truth*, and that they can comprehend all things. For otherwiſe how ſhould their not being able to comprehend a thing, be an Argument that it is not true? This I preſume is a Principle our Adverſaries would be loth to own, and indeed with good Reaſon, it being the moſt extravagantly abſurd and ſelf-arrogating one that can poſſibly enter the Thought, or proceed from the Mouth of a Man. And accordingly I do not know any *Socinian* that had the immodeſty in terms openly to aſſert it. But this is what they muſt come to if they will ſpeak out, and what in the mean time they do vertually and implicitly ſay. So then their procedure in ſhort ſeems to be this, They firſt ſet their Reaſon above all things, and then will believe nothing that is above their Reaſon. And if this be not in an unreaſonable meaſure to exalt

exalt that Faculty, to carry it beyond its due bounds, nay to ſet it no bounds at all, but ſtrictly to make it Infinite, and ſo to aſcribe to it no leſs than a Divine Perfection, I muſt profeſs my deſpair ever to know what is.

8. To be the adequate Meaſure of all Truth, ſo as to have no one Truth above the comprehenſion of it, is as much as can be ſaid of the Reaſon and Underſtanding of God himſelf. His Infinite Underſtanding is indeed truly and neceſſarily ſo, and whatever is above his Reaſon is for that very reaſon moſt certainly not true. Becauſe he eſſentially comprehending all that truly is, it muſt neceſſarily follow that whatever he does not comprehend muſt be *nothing*. But to ſay the ſame of the Reaſon of a Man, or of the Intelligence of the moſt illuminated Angel, would be to confound all diſtinction between Finite and Infinite, God and Creature, and to advance the moſt abſurd, and withal the moſt impious and blaſpemous Propoſition imaginable. And yet this is the general Principle upon which the Body

Body of *Socinianiſm* turns, and by which it would be moſt directly and moſt compendiouſly confuted.

9. I ſhall therefore take hold of it by this handle: And ſince that which is a Principle one way, as we argue forwards from the Cauſe to the Effect, may be conſidered as a Conſequence another way, as we argue backwards from the Effect to the Cauſe; and ſince there are theſe two general ways of Reaſoning, I ſhall therefore proceed both theſe wayes in the management of the preſent Argument, which accordingly ſhall turn chiefly upon this double Hinge. Firſt, I ſhall overturn their Principle (I call it theirs, becauſe 'tis what they muſt at laſt neceſſarily come to) by ſhewing that Humane Reaſon is not the meaſure of Truth, or that there may be ſome things True which are above the comprehenſion of Humane Reaſon, and that therefore a things being above Reaſon is no concluding Argument of its not being True. Secondly, I ſhall argue *ab Abſurdo*, by ſhewing that if a things being above Reaſon were an Argument of its not being True, then

then it will follow that Humane Reaſon is the Meaſure of all Truth, which if I bring them to, I ſhall think them reduced to a ſufficient Abſurdity. Theſe I intend as the two great Pillars of this Work, which like the ſides of an Arch will ſtrengthen and bear up one another, that which is liable to exception in the former part being made out in the latter, and that which is liable to exception in the latter being made out in the former. For if it be queſtioned in the Firſt Part whether this be indeed their Principle, *That Humane Reaſon is the Meaſure of all Truth*, that will appear in the Second, wherein it will be ſhewn to follow from their ſuppoſition. And if it be queſtion'd in the Second Part, whether this their Principle be abſurd, and ſo whether they are reduced to an Abſurdity, that will appear in the Firſt, wherein this Principle is ſhewn to be Falſe.

10. And when by this Method I have ſhewn in general both *a Priori* and *a Poſteriori*, that a things being above Humane Reaſon is of it ſelf no ſufficient Argument of its not being

ing true, I ſhall then make application of all to the Myſteries of the Chriſtian Religion, which I ſhall ſhew may be true notwithſtanding their being above Humane Reaſon, and ſo that their being above it is no juſt ground to conclude them Falſe, and that therefore they ought to be *believed* notwithſtanding their being above our Reaſon, which in this caſe ought to be no prejudice to our Faith, ſuppoſing them otherwiſe ſufficiently revealed. Which whether they are or no I ſhall not diſcuſs, my deſign at preſent not being to enter into the detail of the Controverſie, to *prove* the particular Myſteries of the Chriſtian Faith, ſuch as the Trinity, Incarnation, or the like, but only to lay a general ground and foundation for the belief of thoſe Articles, and to deſtroy that upon which the Body of *Socinianiſm* ſtands. The Great and General Principle of which I take to be, That nothing is to be believ'd as reveal'd by God, that is above the comprehenſion of Humane Reaſon; or, That a Man is to believe nothing but what he can comprehend. Which Principle I hope,

hope by the help of God, with the utmoſt Evidence and Demonſtration to overthrow. And becauſe in order to this I muſt firſt give a direct and profeſs'd Account of *Reaſon* and *Faith*, beſides what will be ſaid Incidentally and Occaſionally of them in the Courſe of the Treatiſe, whoſe main deſign is ſo to adjuſt and accommodate the Natures and Properties of theſe two things together, as to ſhew the Reaſonableneſs of believing the Myſteries of the Chriſtian Religion; thereupon it is that I intitle the whole, *An Account of Reaſon and Faith, in relation to the Myſteries of Chriſtianity.* This is the Groſs of what I deſign, the Particulars of which will be more diſtinctly laid down and accounted for in the following Chapters.

CHAP. I.

Of Reaſon.

1. AMbiguity of Words being one great occaſion of Confuſion of Thoughts; whoever will Diſcourſe clearly and diſtinctly of any Subject, muſt in the firſt place fix and ſettle the ſignification of his Terms, in caſe they are Ambiguous; that is, if one and the ſame Term be applyed to different Ideas. In this caſe, Definition of the Name is to go before the Definition of the Thing; between which two I conceive the difference to be this, That in a *Nominal* Definition the word is only determin'd to ſuch a certain Idea, whereas in a *Real* one, the Idea it ſelf is opened and explained by ſome other Ideas that are ſuppoſed to be contain'd and involv'd in it. Upon which account it is that *Nominal* Definitions are Arbitrary, and therefore inconteſtable, and therefore may be

be uſed as Principles in Diſcourſe, as they are in *Geometry*; whereas *Real* Definitions are not Arbitrary, but muſt be conform'd to the Nature of things, and ſo are not to be taken for Principles, whoſe Truth is to be *ſuppoſed*, but for diſputable Propoſitions, whoſe Truth is to be *proved*.

2. *Reaſon* therefore being an ambiguous word, and of various acceptation, before I proceed to give an account of the Nature of the thing it will be neceſſary that I define the Name; which will alſo be the better *defined*, if it be firſt *diſtinguiſht*. Now all Diſtinction being a ſort of *Diviſion*, in which, according to the Rules of *Logick*, the Diſtribution ought to be into the moſt general, and moſt immediate Members, I ſhall accordingly diſtinguiſh of the ſeveral meanings of this word, *Reaſon*, by the ſame meaſure as I would divide any whole into its parts.

3. I conſider therefore that the moſt general diſtribution of Reaſon is into that of the Object and that of the Subject; or, to word it more Intelligibly, though perhaps not altogether ſo Scholaſtically, into that

of the Thing, and that of the Understanding. Reason *objective*, or of the Thing, is again very various: Sometimes it is taken for *Truth*, and that both for Truth of the Thing, namely the Essential relations that are between Ideas, and for Truth of the Proposition which is its conformity to those Ideal Relations. Thus it is taken the first way for the Ideal Relations themselves, when we inquire whether the *Reasons* of Good and Evil are *ab Eterno*, meaning by *Reasons* the Essential Relations or Differences. Thus again it is taken the second way, for the agreement or conformity of a Proposition with those Essential Relations; as when we say, *This is Sense and Reason*; meaning that the Proposition is true, and conformable to the Nature of things. Sometimes again it is taken for the Medium, Argument, or Principle whereby a Truth is proved; as when we say, *Do you prove this by Reason or by Authority?* Sometimes again for the Rules and Measures of Reasoning; as suppose I should say, *That Reason is the fittest Study for a Rational Creature*, I should be supposed

poſed to mean thoſe Rules and Meaſures whereby we ought to reaſon, and ſo to intend a commendation of *Logick*. Sometimes again it is taken for Moderation; as when we ſay, *There is Reaſon in all things*. Sometimes for Right, Equity or Juſtice; the obſervation of which is commonly call'd, *Doing a Man Reaſon*. It is alſo taken for the End or Motive of an Action; as when we ſay, *For what Reaſon do you this or that*; in which ſenſe it is uſed by the Poet;

——*ſtat pro Ratione voluntas.*

4. Come we now to the Conſideration of Reaſon, as 'tis taken *ſubjectively*, the other general part of its diſtinction, in which alſo there is ſome variety of Acceptation. For it is ſometimes taken for the Act, ſometimes for the Habit, and ſometimes for the Natural Power or Faculty of Reaſoning. For the Act; as when we ſay of a Man aſleep, that *he is deprived of his Reaſon*. For the Habit; as when we ſay of a Man, that *he has loſt his Reaſon*, when his Intellectuals are mightily

diſorder'd and impair'd by a Diſeaſe. For the Natural Power or Faculty of Reaſoning; as when we ſay, *That Man is a Creature indued with Reaſon.* Which being a Propoſition of Univerſal Truth, and that proceeds of Man as Man, muſt neceſſarily be verified of every Man, and conſequently muſt not be meant of the Act or Habit of Reaſon, (for theſe are not at all times in every Man) but of the Natural Power or Faculty of it, which is not lyable to be ſuſpended as the Act, nor loſt as the Habit, but is Eſſential to the Nature of Man, that which conſtitutes him what he is, and diſtinguiſhes him from other Creatures, and conſequently is inſeparable from him, whether aſleep or awake, whether ſick or well.

5. Reaſon thus conſider'd as it ſtands for a Power or Faculty in Human Nature, may be taken again either largely or ſtrictly. Largely, for the Power of Thinking or Perception in general, whereby a Man is capable of knowing or underſtanding any Truth, let it be by what means, or in what order or method ſoever.

ſoever. Strictly, for the ſame Power proceeding after a certain ſpecial manner, and according to a peculiar order and method, namely, from the knowledge of one thing to that of another, or to the knowledge of what is, as yet, obſcure and unknown, by the knowledge of what is more clear and better known; concerning which a fuller account by and by.

6. After having thus diſtinguiſht, with what exactneſs of order I could, the ſeveral Acceptations of the word *Reaſon*, I ſhall in the next place define in which of theſe Senſes I now uſe it. By Reaſon then in this place, I intend not Reaſon of the Object, but that of the Subject; and that not as to the Act or Habit, but as to the Natural Power or Faculty of Reaſoning. And that again not as it is taken ſtrictly, as it uſes a certain particular proceſs in its operation, but as it is taken more at large for the power of perceiving or knowing in general. According to which Senſe *Reaſon* is here the ſame with *Underſtanding*. And ſo it is often uſed; as when we ſay, *The Reaſon of a Man teaches him this or that*;

meaning his Underſtanding at large, or the general Power whereby he underſtands. For if *Science*, which ſtrictly taken is that particular kind of Knowledge which is acquired by Demonſtration, be yet often uſed more largely for Knowledge in general, why may not *Reaſon*, the great Principle and Faculty of *Science*, which ſtrictly taken ſignifies a Power of Knowing by ſuch a certain way and in ſuch a certain manner of proceeding, be taken as well in a greater latitude, for the Power of Knowing or Underſtanding in general?

7. And the Nature of the Subject and Queſtion now under Conſideration requires that it ſhould be thus uſed here. For when 'tis inquired whether there be any thing in Religion above Reaſon, the meaning certainly can be no other than whether there be any thing which ſurpaſſes the Power and Capacity of a Mans Underſtanding to comprehend or account for? And he that ſays there is nothing in Religion above Reaſon, is ſuppoſed to mean, that there is nothing in it beyond the comprehenſion of a Mans Natural Underſtanding,

ing, nothing but what he can profound and fathom. And ſo alſo he that ſays, that there are Myſteries in Chriſtianity, or things above our Reaſon, muſt be preſumed to mean, that there are Reveal'd Truths that ſo far exceed the meaſure of our Intellectual Faculties, and are of a ſize ſo diſproportionate to our Minds, that with all the force and penetration of Spirit, and the utmoſt application of Thought, we cannot poſſibly comprehend them, be our method of proceeding what it will. I do not intend by this to ſtate the Queſtion (which ſhall be done more fully in its due place) but only to give an account of one of its Terms, and to ſhew that by Reaſon I both do and ſhould here mean, A Mans Natural Power of Knowing or Underſtanding in general. In which uſe of the word, 'tis no ſmall Authority to me that the Excellent and moſt Accurate Author of *L. Art de Penſer*, defines *Logick* to be an Art of well conducting ones Reaſon in the knowledge of things: Where by *Reaſon* 'tis plain he muſt mean the ſame as *Underſtanding*.

8. What

8. What this Power or Principle of Underſtanding is in its ſelf, or in its own Nature and Eſſence, I do not pretend to know, as not having any clear Idea of my own Soul, and indeed as not knowing my ſelf at all by *Idea*, but only by a confuſe Sentiment of internal Conſciouſneſs. And therefore I ſhall not go about to examine what it is. For the ſame reaſon alſo I ſhall not ſet my ſelf to conſider whether the Underſtanding be any Power or Faculty really diſtinct from the Soul, or only the Soul it ſelf acting after a certain manner, this being almoſt as obſcure as the other; and I care not to employ either my own Thoughts, or my Readers, upon things whereof I have not any clear Conception. All that I ſhall therefore further treat of concerning the Underſtanding (for ſo I now call our Reaſon) ſhall be with reſpect to its *Operations*, by which the Nature of it is beſt known, and whereof we are not only Conſcious by way of *Sentiment*, but have alſo, or at leaſt by ſelf-reflexion may have, ſome Notion and Conception by way of *Idea*.

9. Now

9. Now these are ordinarily supposed to be three, *Apprehension*, *Judgment* and *Discourse*: By *Apprehension*, meaning the simple view or perception of a thing; by *Judgment*, the joining or separating of Ideas by Affirmation or Negation; by *Discourse*, the collecting of one thing from another. And upon this threefold ground our Systems of *Logick* have for a great while proceeded with great Agreement. But as Authentick as Time and Consent have made this Division, I cannot think it right, when I compare it with what by self-reflexion I find to pass within my own Mind. For supposing it were true as to the matter of it; that is, I mean, that Judgment and Discourse did really belong to the Understanding (which yet the Philosophers of the *Cartesian* way will by no means allow) yet the Form of it must needs be very unartificial and inaccurate. For Truth being the general Object of the Understanding, and there being nothing in Truth but Ideas and the Relation that is between them, 'tis impossible there should be any more operations of the Under-

Underſtanding than *Perception* and *Judgment*; Perception as to the Ideas themſelves, and Judgment as to their Relation. Which Judgment 'tis true may be either Immediate or Mediate; Immediate when the Relations of Ideas are judg'd of by the very Ideas themſelves, or Mediate when they are judg'd of by the help and means of ſome other Idea, but then all this is but Judgment ſtill, though in two different ways, the difference between them being the ſame as between judging of a thing under the Formality of a Propoſition, and judging of the ſame thing under the Formality of a Concluſion. Theſe indeed are different ways of judging, but ſtill they are both but Judgments, and one as much as the other. So that in reality that which theſe Men call *Diſcourſe* is but a *ſpecies* of *Judgment*; and if for that reaſon they will conſider it as diſtinct from Judgment and make it a third Operation, they might as well have put in the other *ſpecies* too (Judgment immediate) and ſo made a fourth. But then this is againſt the great Fundamental Law of Diviſion which requires

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quires that one of the Members ought not to be ſo included in the other, as that the other may be affirm'd of it. Which is plainly the Caſe here, this being ſuch a kind of Diviſion, as if one ſhould divide a Living Creature into a Plant, an Animal and a Man, and that becauſe Diſcourſe is as much a Species of Judgment as Man is of Animal. And herein (though the matter be ſo clear that I need it not) yet I happen to have the Authority of a conſiderable Philoſopher on my ſide, Monſieur *Derodon*, who in theſe few words expreſſes his Senſe full and home to this purpoſe; *The third Operation of the Mind*, ſays he, *is commonly call'd Diſcourſe, but is properly the Judgment of the Conſequent, as inferr'd from the Judgment of the Antecedent.* Philoſo. contract. p. 242.

10. By this it is evident, that ſuppoſing the matter of this Diviſion never ſo true, that is, that Judgment and Diſcourſe do appertain to the Underſtanding, yet the Form of it is wrong; Diſcourſe, which is here made a third member of the Diviſion, being contain'd under Judgment,

ment, which is the ſecond, as the Species of it. But neither is the *matter* of it true. For Judgment and Diſcourſe, or to ſpeak more accurately, *Judgment*, whether immediate or mediate, does indeed not belong to the Underſtanding, but (as will by and by appear) to the Will. There is but one general Operation that belongs to the Underſtanding, and that is *Perception*. For as I ſaid before, Truth being the general Object of the Underſtanding, and there being nothing in Truth but Ideas and their Relations, all that the Underſtanding can here have to do will be only to *perceive* theſe Ideas, and the ſeveral Relations that are between them. For when this is done, then is a thing ſufficiently underſtood, to underſtand a thing being no more than to perceive its Ideas, and how they ſtand related to one another. Here is the whole compaſs and full extent of the Underſtanding, and all that we can poſſibly conceive by it; and he that perceives Ideas and their Relations underſtands as much of them as is to be underſtood. Whereby it is evident,

evident, that Perception is the only operation of the Underſtanding, and that it can have no other. 'Tis true indeed there is variety in this Perception, it being either Simple or Complex; Simple of the Ideas themſelves, and Complex of their Relations; which latter again is either Immediate or Mediate, (as was ſaid before of *Judgment*) but ſtill 'tis all but *Perception*, though differently modified; which therefore I conclude to be the only Operation that properly belongs to the Underſtanding.

11. But now if all that of right belongs to the Underſtanding be Perception, then 'tis moſt certain that Judgment cannot belong to the Underſtanding, and that becauſe Judgment is not Perception. For we are ſaid to judge as we perceive, and ſome are ſo much in haſte that they will judge *before* they perceive, which plainly ſhews them to be two different things. And that they are ſo this one Argument well conſidered is a Demonſtration, that Judgment is a Fallible thing, that may be true or falſe as it happens; whereas Perception

ception is always true, it being a Contradiction that it ſhould be otherwiſe: For what a Man does not truly perceive he does not perceive at all. I conclude therefore that Judgment is not Perception; and ſince Perception is (as has been ſhewn) the only operation of the Underſtanding, I conclude again that Judgment does not belong to the Underſtanding. It muſt therefore belong to the Will, which is the proper ſeat both of Judgment and of Errour too. And it is nothing elſe but the Will's conſenting to and acquieſcing in the Repreſentations that are made by the Underſtanding. Which agrees well with thoſe weighty and very fruitful Maxims, "That "the Will is the Subject and Prin-"ciple of all Errour as well as Sin "(which indeed ought to be volun-"tary to make it culpable). That "'tis in our Power to avoid Errour "by ſuſpending our Judgment till "the Evidence be clear, though 'tis "not in our Power to avoid Igno-"rance or Non-Perception of many "things by reaſon of the limitedneſs "of our Faculties. That the fault

"of

" of thoſe that err is, that their
" Wills run before their Under-
" ſtandings, that they judge and
" pronounce before they perceive,
" or of things whereof they have
" really no Perception; which in-
" deed is a great fault, and the cauſe
" of all our diſorders. That we are
" accountable for our Judgments as
" well as for any of our other Acti-
" ons. And laſtly, That God is not
" the Cauſe of any of our Errours,
" which with reſpect to him are on-
" ly *Negations*, occaſioned only by
" his not having given us larger Ca-
" pacities; but with reſpect to our
" ſelves are *Privations*, proceeding
" from the ill uſe we make of thoſe
" Natural Capacities he has indued
" us with. All which great and mo-
mentous Truths are grounded upon the very Principle now laid down, (which by this may appear to be ſomething more than a Curioſity) That Judgment however commonly aſcribed to the Underſtanding, does yet really belong to the Will, and not to the Underſtanding, whoſe operations are all terminated within the limits of Perception. So well do

theſe things cohere together, and ſo aptly does one Truth hang and depend upon another.

12. But as right as I think this Account of the matter to be, yet conſidering what an innovation it is from the Scholaſtic Meaſures, and how like a Paradox it looks, I think a little Countenance from Authority may do well to counterpoiſe the Prejudice of Singularity. And becauſe this is a greater Innovation than the precedent one, I ſhall back it with an Authority proportionably greater than what was uſed upon the other occaſion. *It may be well concluded from what has been ſaid* (ſays a Modern Writer, and whom I think I may venture to call a Philoſopher) *that the Underſtanding never judges, ſince it only perceives, or ſince Judgments and even Reaſonings, with reſpect to the Underſtanding, are only pure Perceptions. That 'tis the Will alone which truly judges in acquieſcing in that which the Underſtanding repreſents to it, and in voluntarily repoſing it ſelf therein. And that alſo 'tis that alone which leads us into Errour.* Again; *I ſay then that there is no other*

Recherche *de la Verité.* Liv. 1. p. 10.

other difference on the part of the Understanding between a simple Perception, Judgment and Discourse, but that the Understanding perceives a simple thing without any relation to any thing whatsoever, by a simple Perception. That it perceives the Relations between two or more things in Judgment. And that in fine, it perceives the Relations that are between the Relations of things in Discourse. So that all the Operations of the Understanding are no other than pure Perceptions. All which he further explains and confirms by an Illustration taken from Numbers, with some other very considerable Reflections upon it; which for brevity's sake I leave the curious Reader to consult in order to his better satisfaction.

13. To this Account of this most excellent Person I fully agree as to the substance and matter of it, only would by his leave make some little Alteration in the Form of it; concerning which he had no occasion to be sollicitous, as not designing a formal and exact division of the Operations of the Understanding; but only to shew that they were all no

other than pure Perceptions. And ſo far his repreſentation of the Matter is right, and ſo, I ſuppoſe, will the Form of it be too if it run thus. 'The only operation of the Underſtanding is Perception: Which Perception is either Simple or Complex. Simple of the Ideas themſelves, and Complex of their Relations. Which Complex Perception is again twofold, Immediate or Mediate. Immediate when the Relations of Ideas are perceiv'd by the perception and collation of the very Ideas themſelves whoſe Relations they are; Mediate when thoſe Relations are perceiv'd by the help or mediation of ſome third Idea, made uſe of as a common meaſure of comparing thoſe Ideas which could not be ſo collated together as to have their Relations perceiv'd by themſelves. And in this, I think, we have a right Account of the Operations of the Underſtanding, both as to Matter and Form; the knowledge of which, conſidering how much *Spirit* is above *Body*, though it were only a piece of Speculation and Curioſity, I ſhould think of greater worth and

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conſideration than that of the Properties of Lines and Figures, or any of the *Phenomena's* of Nature.

14. This Complex Perception, or the Perception of the Relations that are between Ideas, I take to be the ſame with what we commonly call *Knowledge*: Which is uſually defined by an *evident Aſſent*, but I think not rightly. For an evident Aſſent is the ſame as an Aſſent upon Evidence; that is, an Aſſent to an evident thing, or to a thing whereof we have an evident Perception. But now Perception and Aſſent are two things, (the former being the ground of the latter) and 'tis in the *Perception*, not in the *Aſſent*, that Knowledge properly conſiſts. For Knowledge is moſt certainly an Act of the Underſtanding; and it was ſhewn before, that the only Operation of that is *Perception*. As for Aſſent, that will be found to belong to another Principle. For Aſſent is no other than an *Affirmative Judgment*; (for then a Man is ſaid to aſſent to a thing when he judges it to be ſo or ſo, and then to diſſent when he judges it not to be ſo); and Judg-

ment, as was ſhewn before, belongs to the Will. Nor is it any thing to the contrary that we neceſſarily aſſent to whatſoever we clearly perceive. This neither proves Aſſent and Perception to be one and the ſame, nor that Aſſent does not belong to the Will, but only that the Will neceſſarily follows, and cannot poſſibly reſiſt the clear Light of the Underſtanding; which is a great Truth, but no Objection. Aſſent therefore is always *voluntary*, tho' not always *free*; and whether voluntary or free is a plain Act of the Will imbracing and acquieſcing in what is repreſented to it by the Underſtanding. And therefore though we do always aſſent to what we evidently perceive, yet Knowledge does not conſiſt in the Aſſent, but in the Perception, which is the ground of that Aſſent.

15. For, to puſh the matter a little further, though Aſſent neceſſarily follows upon clear Perception, and cannot be ſeparated from it, yet ſure we may uſe *Abſtraction* here, and conſider Perception without conſidering Aſſent, the Idea of the one

not

not including the Idea of the other. But now I would fain know whether he that clearly perceives the Relations of things one to another, may not be truly ſaid to underſtand or know thoſe things? Or whether there be any thing further requiſite to the underſtanding or knowledge of a thing after a full and clear perception of it? If not, (as I think no Man that conſiders what he ſpeaks will ſay that there is) then Knowledge is ſuppoſed to be in its compleat and perfect act of being by Perception alone, and that before any Aſſent be given; which Aſſent therefore cannot go to the making up of its Nature, ſince it was ſuppoſed to be compleat without it. To which I add, That let our Aſſent be join'd with never ſo much Evidence, ſtill we are ſaid to aſſent becauſe we know, and to what we know. So that our Knowledge is here preſuppoſed to our Aſſent, and conſequently is in order of Nature at leaſt before it, and therefore cannot conſiſt in it. I conclude therefore that Knowledge is not *evident Aſſent*, but *Perception*, particularly that Per-

ception which I call Complex, the perception of the Relations that are between Ideas, whether as to Agreement or Diſagreement. Which, I think, till we can meet with a better, may ſerve for a tolerable Definition of Knowledge.

16. But now whereas this Complex Perception (as was noted above) is either Immediate or Mediate; hence it is that our Knowledge alſo admits of the ſame diviſion, being either Immediate or Mediate, or if you pleaſe, *Intuitive* or *Demonſtrative*. Between which two the difference uſually made is, that in Intuitive Knowledge we have an intire and ſimultaneous view of things, and ſee all at once; whereas in Demonſtrative Knowledge our proſpect opens by degrees and we proceed ſtep by ſtep, advancing from the knowledge of one thing to that of another. This account indeed is true, but not explicit enough to make it clear: For 'tis Characteriſing from the effect only, and does not explain how our view in Intuitive Knowledge comes to be ſo intire, and in Demonſtrative ſo gradual

dual and progreſſive. This therefore muſt be deduced higher, and explained by a more diſtinct Principle. And I think we ſhall diſtinguiſh them more clearly and exactly by ſaying, That *Intuitive* Knowledge is when we perceive the agreement or diſagreement of one Idea with another immediately and by themſelves, without the mediation or intervention of any other Idea. *Demonſtrative*, when this agreement or diſagreement is perceiv'd not immediately, by comparing the Ideas with themſelves, but mediately, by comparing them with a third; that is, when we perceive them to agree or diſagree with themſelves, as we find them to do ſo with ſome third Idea, which we are oftentimes forced to make uſe of as a common meaſure, becauſe we cannot always, by reaſon of the narrowneſs of our Faculties, ſo collate and confront our other Ideas together, as to ſee whether they agree or no by their mere compariſon.

17. This Demonſtrative Knowledge is what in the Schools is call'd *Science*, concerning which great ſtir

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is made, and variety of Definitions given, but which by the meaſures already laid down, appears to be nothing elſe but a Mediate Perception, or the perception of the Relations of Ideas by the mediation of ſome other Idea. This other Idea is what we uſually call a Medium or Proof, becauſe it is the common meaſure whereby our Ideas are compared, and the Relations between them perceiv'd. And 'tis the form and proceſs of the Underſtanding uſing this middle Idea as a meaſure whereby to perceive the agreement or diſagreement of the others, according as they agree or diſagree with this, that I would call *Reaſoning*, which is not the very ſame with Science, but the way and method to it. For we are ſaid to *reaſon* in order to know, and Science is the effect of Demonſtration, according to that known ſaying in Logic, *Demonſtratio eſt Syllogiſmus ſcientiam parions.*

18. If this Account of *Reaſoning* be not clear enough to make it intelligible in it ſelf, or to diſtinguiſh it from *Science*, I would further explain it thus, by ſaying that Reaſoning

ing (as I here consider it with respect to the Understanding) is nothing else but the successive Perception of each of the extream Ideas with the middle one, in order to perceive the union that is between them by the union that they have with the middle Idea. As for Example: I am to perceive that Space is Body; and not being able to perceive this by the immediate inspection of these two Ideas, I call in a third to my assistance, and proceed to the perception of it thus: Whatever is extended is Body; Space is extended, therefore Space is Body. Here 'tis plain that I perceive the union of the two extream Ideas *Space* and *Body*, by the successive Perception of the union that each of them have with the middle Idea, *extended*. Now the very Perception it self of the union of the two extream Ideas, Space and Body, by the mediation of the third and middle one, is what I would call *Science*: For 'tis in the Formality of this Mediate Perception that I am said to *know* that Space is Body. But the successive Perception that I have of the union

of

of each of these two extream Ideas with the middle Idea in order to perceive the union they have among themselves, is what I would call *Reasoning*. Which certainly cannot be the very Perception of the conclusion it self (for that would confound it with Science) and yet must be Perception too, (or else it would not belong to the Understanding) and therefore can be no other than this successive Perception that I speak of. Whereby it may appear that the Reasoning here specified is not only distinct from Science, but also from that Reasoning which consists in illative Affirmations and Negations, and so is a Species of Judgment, and accordingly belongs to the Will, not to the Understanding, as was both remark'd and accounted for before.

19. Those things which are known or perceiv'd by Intuitive Knowledge we call *Principles*, and those things which are perceiv'd by Demonstrative Knowledge we call *Conclusions*: Which though equally certain (because the Objects of Knowledge) are yet not so clear as Principles, which

which ſerve indeed to the demonſtration of other things, but need none themſelves, as being viſible by their own Light, and ſometimes are ſo evident that they are not ſo much as capable of any, but are ſtrictly indemonſtrable, there being nothing more clear than themſelves whereby they may receive further Evidence. We ſay of ſuch Propoſitions, *That they are as clear as the Light*; and there is more aptneſs in the compariſon than all that uſe it, I believe, are aware of. For Light is ſeen immediately and by it ſelf, and not by the mediation of any thing elſe; whereas all other things are ſeen by Light. The Light that is thus ſeen by it ſelf anſwers to *Principles*, and thoſe other things which are ſeen by Light anſwer to *Concluſions*. And the reſemblance holds as well on the part of the Act as of the Object: For the firſt of theſe ways of ſeeing anſwers to Intuition, and the laſt to Demonſtration. So ſurpriſing is the agreement between Viſion and Knowledge, and ſo ſtrange and wonderful the proportion in this as well as in ſome other things between the Senſible

Senſible and the Intellectual World.

20. *Intuition* is by far the moſt perfect and excellent way of Knowledge, as being more clear, more ſimple, and more intire. More *clear*, for here we have all Light without any mixture of Darkneſs, whereas in the other there is one dark ſide. More *ſimple*, for here the Mind perceives the Truth by one ſingle View, whereas in the other it is fain to multiply its Perception. More *intire*, for here again we have the proſpect lying altogether before us in its full and whole extent, whereas in the other it opens gradually and ſucceſſively, the Light ſtealing in upon us more and more as we go further and further, as it does upon Men that travel toward the *Eaſt*. To which may be further added, that Intuitive Knowledge ſuppoſes and proceeds from perfection of the Underſtanding, whoſe Perceptive Faculty is hereby argued to be very bright and clear. For it muſt be a very clear Perception to perceive the Relations of Ideas by the very Ideas themſelves. Whereas Demonſtrative Knowledge, and the neceſſity of Reaſoning

Reaſoning in order to it, is founded upon the narrowneſs of our Intellectual Capacities, which not being able to perceive the Truth or Falſhood of a Propoſition by the ſingle collation of the two Ideas that compoſe it, are fain to make uſe of a third as a common meaſure between them; and ſo from the conſideration of ſomething more clear and better known, to proceed in the ſearch of what is more obſcure and leſs known. Accordingly we attribute the way of Intuition to the moſt Perfect Beings, God and Angels. Though as to Angels, I make no great doubt but that in the Conſideration of very compounded Queſtions, and ſuch as include a multiplicity of Relations they are fain to uſe Reaſoning as well as we (as in the more ſimple ones we uſe Intuition as well as they) though perhaps after a much more perfect manner, and by ſuch compendious and facilitating Rules as we know nothing of. And as they may be ſuppoſed when they do reaſon, to reaſon better and more expeditely than we, ſo with equal probability it may be preſumed, conſidering the

great

great diſproportion of Natures and States between us, that they uſe Intuition in very many things wherein we are forc'd to have recourſe to Reaſoning.

21. Hereafter indeed when, as the Scripture tells us, all that is imperfect about us ſhall be done away, and we ſhall be ἰσάγγελοι, not only like but equal to the Angels, we ſhall be able to ſee ('tis to be hoped) by Intuition too; and that many things which we here not only were ignorant of, but thought impoſſible; things that were not only above our *Reaſon*, but, as we thought, contrary to it. We ſhall not only be able to reaſon better than we do now, but ſhall in moſt things not ſtand in need of any *Reaſoning* at all, but ſhall with one ſimple View glance over and through the *Relations* of Ideas, and ſo have an intire proſpect of the fair Field of Truth. But at preſent we muſt travel it over, and that with many a weary ſtep, there being but very few things that we know by Intuition, no more than juſt to give us a taſte of the great Priviledge of Heaven; and to incou-

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rage both our *Deſires* and our *Hopes* of that perfect State, when we ſhall be ſo far from needing any Logic to direct us in our reaſoning, that we ſhall have (in compariſon) but little need or uſe even of *Reaſon* it ſelf. But in this preſent ſtate of our Nonage and Infirmity our Neceſſity of it is very great. For our Intuition is ſo ſhort-ſighted, and reaches ſo very little a way, that, as, if we knew no more than what we can by this Means attain to, the Compaſs of our Knowledge would be ſo very Scanty that we ſhould not have near light enough to direct us in our journey through the World. So if we would Know more, and ſee to a further diſtance from us, we muſt aſſiſt our Feeble Eye by the Advantage of a Glaſs. Now *Reaſon* is this Glaſs, Naturally indeed a very good Proſpective, but which *Logic*, and eſpecially *Algebra*, has improved into a Teleſcope. But yet ſtill 'tis but an Artificial way of ſeeing, and all Art ſuppoſes and argues a Defect in Nature. And though it be a great help, yet we know 'tis no very great Com-

mendation to a man's eye-ſight to ſee with Spectacles.

22. And why then are we Proud? And why proud of that which ſhould rather deject us, and make us Humble, of our Imperfections and our Defects? Our Natural *Reaſon* is a Mark of our Limitation as Creatures, and our Artificial one of our Infirmity as Men, and both together give us but little Light, and help us to ſee but a very little way off, and that after the moſt imperfect and defective Manner, ſuch as upbraids our Ignorance at the very ſame time that it increaſes our Knowledge, our *Reaſon* not ſo much inlightning, as betraying the Darkneſs of our Underſtandings. Some few things indeed we Know as Angels do, by *Intuition* (or elſe we could not ſo much as reaſon like Men) but ſtill the main Fund of our Knowledge lies in the *Rational* and Demonſtrative kind, and we are fain to uſe Clues and Chains to Conduct our Thoughts through the infinite Mazes and Labyrinths of Truth, to proceed in a Train from one thing to another, to walk ſtep by ſtep, and

feel

feel out our way with warineſs and Caution like Men that go in the Dark. And ſuch indeed is our ſtate in this Body and in this World. 'Tis now a kind of *Night* with us, as having for the Moſt part only the Leſſer Light, *Reaſon*, for our Direction. As for the Greater, *Inſpiration*, we have little more of that than of the refracted Beams of the Sun a little before its riſing, and after its ſetting, enough to make a Twilight, a Mixture of Light and Darkneſs, but ſuch a Mixture as is very unequal, Darkneſs making the far greater part of the Compoſition. And is not this Conſideration ſufficient (if there were nothing elſe) to take down our Pride, and inſpire us with a Sentiment of the profoundeſt Humility and Self-dejection. If not, let us Conſider that even this Leſſer Light that is to govern our preſent Night and Darkneſs, does oftentimes fail us, and ſuffer an Eclipſe. Let us Conſider that we have a darker ſide yet, and are ſubject to a Much lower Diſpenſation. There being many things, and thoſe of the

highest Nature, and greatest importance, wherein our Reason is utterly at a loss, and cannot help us out, and with respect to which being destitute of *Sight*, we must be Content to walk altogether by *Faith*. Concerning which in the following Chapter.

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

Of Faith.

1. FAith is a Term of great Ambiguity as well as Reason, but not to insist upon the several Acceptations of it as it is used either in Divine or in Humane Writings, I shall only define in what sense I here take it, and then proceed to such Considerations upon it as may serve to lay open its Nature so far as is requisite to the Present Design.

2. I do not take Faith here for the Object of Faith, but for the Act or Habit of Faith, and that not *Ethically* consider'd, as it denotes the Moral Vertues of Veracity, Fidelity, Honesty and the like, but *Logically*, as it signifies a certain Assent, Judgement or Perswasion of the Mind, particularly that which is founded upon Testimony or Authority. So that the Generical and Common Part of Faith is *Assent*, wherein it

agrees with ſome other Acts of the Mind, and the more ſpecial and peculiar part that limits and Contracts the General, and whereby the whole is differenc'd and diſtinguiſh'd, is the Motive and ground of this Aſſent. 'Tis it ſeems an Aſſent grounded not upon the internal Reaſon and Evidence of the thing, but upon the bare Teſtimony and Authority of the Speaker.

3. For I conſider that there are two general grounds of Aſſent, *Reaſon* and *Authority*. That is, we aſſent to a thing either becauſe we have ſome Perception or Knowledge of it our ſelves, or becauſe its Truth is declared to us by another upon whoſe Knowledge and Veracity we think we may ſafely depend. If the Reaſon or evidence of the thing be imperfect and incomplete, that is, if we perceive only in part, then we yeild a partial and imperfect Aſſent, mix'd with ſome Fear or Suſpicion of the Contrary, which is what we call *Opinion*. But if the Evidence be full and perfect, then we yield a firm and moſt aſſured Aſſent, which is generally diſtinguiſh'd from the other

ther by the Name of *Knowledge*, which according to the common Notion and Definition of it is an *Evident Assent*. But it was shewn before that Knowledge does not Formally Consist in the Assent, but in the Perception which is the Ground of the Assent. And indeed how is it possible it should consist in any thing else? For (to give yet a further Confirmation to what has been already offer'd upon this Occasion) let Assent be never so evident, the evidence lies in the Perception, not in the Assent, which of it self is a blind dark Act of the Mind, and can be said no otherwise to be Evident, than as 'tis an Assent to an Evident thing, that is, to what we *perceive*. But now Perception and Assent are not only two things, but such as belong also to two different and distinct Faculties, and therefore can never joyn together to make up *Knowledge*, which is an Act only of one. And indeed to speak the truth, *Evident Assent* (as 'tis here applied) seems to me a mere jumble of Words confusely uniting together in one Idea Operations that belong to distinct Faculties, one be-

longing to the Will and the other to the Understanding. And how the result of this heterogeneous Composition should be *Knowledge*, I must confess to be indeed a *Mystery* above my Comprehension. And besides, after all, an Evident Assent when resolv'd into more words will amount to the same as an Assent to what we know, and would it not be a Notable Definition of Knowledge, to say, that it is *an Assent to what we know?*

4. If then Knowledge be not an *Evident Assent*, and indeed as to the Formality of it has nothing of Assent in it, as consisting purely and wholely in Perception, 'tis plain that this Assent to an evident thing ought not to be call'd *Knowledge*. For 'tis necessary that the several Species of Assent should all have the general Nature of Assent in them, and consequently this being a certain Species of Assent must partake of the nature of Assent in general, which it cannot do if it be *Knowledge*, for that were to pass over into another Kind, Knowledge not being Assent, but Perception. 'Tis therefore most clear and evident that our Common Systemes have here also

gone

gone upon a wrong ground, and that Knowledge ought not to be put into the Number of the Three Aſſents (which are uſually reckon'd to be *Faith*, *Opinion* and *Science*) ſince the Aſſent whoſe ground is full Evidence, and which is the only one that may pretend and is commonly preſumed to be *Knowledge*, is moſt apparently not ſo, as differing from it no leſs than in the whole Kind.

5. If then it be demanded by what Name I would diſtinguiſh this Second Aſſent to a thing when the Evidence is full and complete from the former wherein the Evidence is ſuppoſed not to be ſo perfect, I anſwer that indeed (ſo little have theſe things been Conſider'd as they ought) there is no proper Name, that I know of, for it. When we aſſent to a thing of incomplete Evidence we call it *Opinion*, and when we aſſent to a thing whoſe Evidence is complete this has been uſually call'd *Knowledge*, but certainly with the utmoſt impropriety, knowledge, as appears, being quite another thing. But by what name to call it, or how to diſtinguiſh it, I profeſs I know not

not. Not for want of real difference and diſtinction in the thing (for my Thought of it is very diſtinct) but merely becauſe we want a word for it. As we do in like manner for Aſſent upon Reaſon in general to diſtinguiſh it from Aſſent upon Authority in general. For as Aſſent upon Authority in general Abſtracting from Humane or Divine is call'd Faith, ſo alſo Aſſent upon Reaſon in general abſtracting from complete or incomplete ſhould be call'd ſomewhat, if one could tell what, as every generical Idea ought to be diſtinguiſh'd by a generical Name. But ſince our Language affords not any one word that will ſerve to either of theſe purpoſes we muſt be content with the *Definitio* inſtead of the *Definitum*, and expreſs the things at large, by ſaying Aſſent upon Reaſon or Evidence, and Aſſent upon ſuch Evidence as is full and complete, which is ſufficient to diſtinguiſh it from Aſſent upon evidence incomplete, though we have no one proper word for this as we have for the other, which is fitly call'd *Opinion*, whereby we denote the imperfection

both

both of the Evidence and of the Aſſent.

6. But now if the Aſſent be *not* grounded upon any internal Reaſon or Evidence of the thing at all, but only upon Teſtimony or Authority, then we call it *Faith*. Which appears to be an Aſſent of a quite different Nature from the other two. For they both agree in the general Nature of Aſſent upon Evidence, and differ only as the Evidence differs, and that is gradually, as complete differs from incomplete. But Faith differs from them both in the whole Kind, as having no Evidence at all, but only Authority for its Ground. And thus we have here a Threefold Aſſent, (though not ſuch as is taught us in the Schools) the Account of which in ſhort proceeds thus. All Aſſent in general is either upon Reaſon or Authority. If the Reaſon be incomplete then 'tis *Opinion*. If complete, then 'tis another kind of Aſſent for which as yet there wants a Name, as alſo there does for Aſſent upon Reaſon in General. But if the Aſſent be upon Authority only, then 'tis *Faith*.

7. Now

7. Now this Authority may be either of God or of Man. If the Authority whereupon our Aſſent is grounded be of Man, then the Aſſent that is ſo grounded is *Human* Faith. If of God, then 'tis *Divine* Faith. Between which two there is this in Common, that they both proceed not upon the internal Light and Evidence of the thing but upon Authority, and ſo agree in the general Nature of Faith, only as the Authority differs ſo the Faith alſo varies, and Human Authority differing from Divine juſt as much as Fallible differs from Infallible, the ſame in proportion will alſo be the Difference between Human and Divine Faith. That is, the former will always be a Fallible, and the latter an Infallible Aſſent.

8. *Human Faith* (though ſometimes as actually undeceiv'd as Divine) is yet always liable to Error and Deception, and ſo doubtful, hazardous and uncertain even when actually true, like a Concluſion drawn from uncertain Premiſſes; in which reſpect it reſembles *Opinion*, and that ſo much that ſome have confounded it

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it with it, though I think illogically enough, ſince though there be a like uncertainty in both Aſſents, yet they differ extremely in their Formal Motives, one being grounded upon Reaſon, and the other upon Authority. And the Diſtinction of theſe Aſſents is not taken from the degree of Certainty wherein they agree, but from the Quality of the Motive wherein they differ. However tho' this makes a great difference in Notion, it makes None in the Affairs of Civil Life, and the Faith of him that believes the Teſtimony of a Man will as to all real intents and purpoſes go for no more than his *Opinion*. And that becauſe though different Aſſents as to the Formality of their Motives, they are yet Much at one rate for Certainty, being both Fallible in their Grounds, and ſo ſubject to Error and Deception.

9. But the Caſe is quite otherwiſe as to *Divine Faith* whoſe Foundation ſtands too ſure not only to be overturn'd, but even ſo much as ſhaken. This Faith is ſtrictly and Abſolutely infallible, not ſubject to the leaſt Error, or Poſſibility of Erring

ring, as having the very *Ground and Pillar of Truth* it ſelf, the Omniſcience and Veracity of God for its Security, than which there neither Needs, nor Can be Greater. 'Tis Moſt Certain that God is both Actively and Paſſively Infallible; his Omniſcience will not ſuffer him to be deceiv'd himſelf, and his infinite Veracity and Truth will not ſuffer him to deceive us. And therefore he that builds his Faith upon his Authority, goes upon the Moſt ſure Grounds, and cannot poſſibly Err in his Aſſent. And as he is ſecure from Error, ſo he is alſo from all juſt reaſon of Scruple or Fear, and leaning upon a firm and indefectible Support, may ſtay and repoſe himſelf upon it with full Acquieſcence. So that there is all the Certainty that can be in this Faith, both Objective and Subjective, that of the Thing, and that of the Perſon. The thing aſſented to is moſt undoubtedly true in it ſelf, and he that aſſents to it may be moſt firmly aſſured and perſwaded of the Truth of it in his own Mind, and among all Temptations to Doubt and Diſtruſt

ſtruſt may with great Triumph and Confidence ſay with the Apoſtle, *I know whom I have believ'd.* 2 Tim. 1. 12.

10. It was obſerv'd a little before of *Humane Faith* that it reſembles *Opinion*, in as much as they are both dubious and uncertain Aſſents, as proceeding upon grounds of like uncertainty, though otherwiſe of different Natures. Now as this Faith reſembles *Opinion*, ſo in like manner it may be obſerv'd of Divine Faith that it reſembles *Science*, or rather that Second Aſſent (for ſo I am forc'd to call it for want of a better Name) which we lately diſcours'd of, and plac'd between Opinion and Faith. The Compariſon here bears the ſame proportion as to Certainty, as it did in the other Caſe as to uncertainty. Divine Faith has all the Certainty that is poſſible, and therefore to be ſure as much as Science or that Second Aſſent can have. There is as much Certainty in the thing aſſented to, and there may be as much Aſſurance and firmneſs of Perſwaſion in the Aſſent it ſelf, or in other words what a man believes upon the Authority of God is in it ſelf as certain as

what

what he knows, and he may alſo be as Certain of it. For he that aſſents to a thing upon full evidence can but aſſent fully and perfectly without ſuſpenſe or heſitation, and ſo alſo can he that aſſents to a thing upon Divine Authority only. His Ground is every whit as Firm and Sure as the others, and why then ſhould the Meaſure of his Aſſurance be leſs? It cannot poſſibly be if he Knows and Conſiders upon what Ground he ſtands. So that thus far, both in regard of the Certainty of the Object, and the Firmneſs of the Perſwaſion, Divine Faith may be juſtly placed upon a level with the Moſt Evident Aſſent whatever.

11. Nor I ſuppoſe will this be thought an undue Elevation of Divine Faith. On the Contrary I expect to be Complain'd of for ſetting the Dignity of it at too low a Pitch by thoſe who ſay that Divine Faith is Firmer than Science. But 'tis for want of the Latter that theſe Men ſo exceſſively extol the Former. I call it exceſſively, becauſe 'tis what ſtrictly and exactly ſpeaking cannot be. For what I Perceive or Know

is even by that very ſuppoſition unqueſtionably true, (or elſe I cannot be ſaid to Know it) and what I believe upon the higheſt Authority can be no more. To ſay therefore that Faith is Firmer than Science, is like ſaying that one ſtreight Line is ſtreighter than another. But perhaps their Meaning only is, that 'tis ſafer relying upon the Authority of God than upon our own Rational Faculties, which indeed is right, and I heartily wiſh all Men were convinc'd of it. For though what I do actually and really Know be to the full as true and certain as what I Believe, and I can no more be out in one than in the other, yet it is More Certain in the general that God cannot deceive me, than that my Reaſon cannot be deceiv'd. Not that what I aſſent to by Divine Faith can have a greater Objective Certainty than what I clearly and diſtinctly Perceive or Know, but only that there is a Poſſibility, not to ſay Danger, of my taking that for a clear and diſtinct Perception which indeed is Not ſo, and ſo though I

cannot be deceiv'd in what I do truly know, yet I may be deceiv'd in thinking that I know when I do not. So that Divine Faith though not more Certain than Knowledge it ſelf, is yet of greater Certainty than our *Knowing Faculties*, and generally ſpeaking the Believer goes upon ſurer grounds than the Man of Reaſon and Demonſtration. Becauſe his Reaſon may poſſibly lead him into Error, whereas the Other's Authority cannot. And when they are both in the right, yet ſtill there will be this difference between them, that his Reaſon is only *not Deceiv'd*, whereas the Other's Faith is *Infallible*.

12. And thus far we have taken a view of the more bright and perfect ſide of Divine Faith, I mean that of its *Firmneſs* and *Certainty*, in reſpect of which it ſtands upon a juſt level with Science. But it has alſo a more dark ſide, in which reſpect it comes ſhort of it, and muſt give it the Precedency. And I think it may be very properly call'd a *Dark* ſide, becauſe it conſiſts in Darkneſs

neſs and Obſcurity, and which is ſtill ſo much the darker, becauſe 'tis ſo peculiar to Faith, and makes ſo great a part of its Character, being the Main Difference that diſtinguiſhes it from Science, or that Second Aſſent before ſpoken of. For as to Firmneſs and Certainty, therein they agree. For Faith may be Firm, becauſe he that believes in God may be ſuppoſed not in the leaſt to heſitate or doubt of the truth of what he reveals. And 'tis alſo certain, becauſe it relies upon the moſt certain Foundation, the Teſtimony of God, who is Infallible himſelf, and cannot deceive. And hitherto they run parallel one to the other. But here begins both the difference and the diſproportion, that there is Clearneſs and Evidence on the ſide of Science, and that Second Aſſent, whereas there is none on the ſide of Faith, which walks indeed upon firm Ground, but altogether in the *dark*. For he that Believes does not give his Aſſent becauſe either by Senſe or Reaſon he perceives the Object of his Faith to be thus or thus, but merely becauſe he has the

Word and Authority of God for it. Which though it be ſufficient to found a Firm and Certain, is yet however not enough to beget a Clear and Evident Aſſent. So that the great and diſtinguiſhing Character of Science and the Second Aſſent, is Light and Evidence, and that of Faith inevidence and Obſcurity, which accordingly is commonly ſaid to be an *inevident Aſſent*. But how and in what ſenſe it is ſo ſeems not commonly to be ſo well underſtood, and for the Conſequence of what depends upon the right ſtating of it, deſerves to be explain'd with all poſſible exactneſs.

13. In order to which we are carefully to diſtinguiſh between the thing believ'd, and the Reaſon or Motive that induces us, to believe it; even as in Knowledge we diſtinguiſh between the thing Known, and the Argument or Medium by which it is Known, the *Scitum* and the *Formalis ratio Sciendi*. The thing Believ'd I would call the Matter or the Object of Faith, and the Motive that induces me to believe it I would call the Formal Reaſon

of

of Faith. *Aquinas* I know calls them both Objects, and then after diſtinguiſhes them by calling the Former the Material Object, and the latter the Formal Object of Faith. Accordingly he ſays that *the Formal Object of Faith is the Firſt Truth*, meaning (as he afterward explains himſelf) that Faith relies upon the Truth of God as its Medium, or Argument. Which Medium I chuſe rather to call (and I think more intelligibly) the formal Reaſon, than the formal Object of Faith. Since the Term (Object) ſeems more properly to deſign the Matter of Faith, or the thing Believ'd, and is hardly applicable to the Motive or Reaſon of Believing. However ſince we both mean one and the ſame thing, there need be no debate upon the different manner of expreſſing it, eſpecially ſince if any one think his Term more intelligible and expreſſive of the Notion intended by it, or has any reverence for it upon any other Conſideration, he is at liberty to ſubſtitute it in the room of the other. 2a2æ. Q. 1. Art. 1.

14. This neceſſary Diſtinction being premiſed, 'tis in the firſt place to be well heeded that when Faith is ſaid to be an obſcure and inevident Aſſent, this Obſcurity or inevidence is not to be applied to the formal Reaſon or Motive of Faith, but only to the Matter or Object of it. I ſay not to the formal Reaſon of it. For as there may be in general a clear Reaſon why a Man ſhould believe an Obſcure thing, ſo 'tis moſt Certain that the formal Reaſon for which we aſſent to the things of Faith is very clear. For this formal Reaſon is no other than the Authority of God, Or rather, ſince this includes the Truth of the Revealer as well as the Revelation it ſelf (for otherwiſe of what Authority would be the Revelation:) I would chuſe to ſay that the *Truth* and *Revelation* of God do jointly make up the formal Reaſon of Divine Faith, which accordingly proceeds upon this double Principle, 1. That whatever God reveals is true, 2. That this or that thing in particular is reveal'd by God. For Faith has its Reaſons as well as

Science

Science (though of another Nature) and its Reaſons are theſe two, as will more diſtinctly, appear by diſpoſing the Proceſs of Faith into a Syllogiſtical Form, which will be this.

Whatever is reveal'd by God is true,
This is Reveal'd by God,
Therefore this is true.

The Concluſion of this Syllogiſm contains both the Matter and the Act of Faith, as it is an Aſſent to ſuch a thing upon ſuch a ground, which is implied by the Illative Particle, *Therefore.* The two other Propoſitions contain the Ground it ſelf or the formal Reaſon of Faith, which you ſee conſiſts of the double Principle before-mention'd. Now 'tis moſt apparent that theſe two Principles are both of them ſufficiently clear, or at leaſt may be ſo. 'Tis clear in the firſt place that whatever is reveal'd by God is true. This is either ſelf-evident, or may be proved from the Idea of God, and ſo has either the Light of a Principle, or of a Concluſion, either an imme-

diate or a Mediate Evidence. And it may be alſo clear (and to be ſure is ſo whenever our Faith is well-grounded) that ſuch a thing in Particular is reveal'd by God. And in both theſe reſpects it is true (what is commonly ſaid) that *Faith is the Higheſt Reaſon.* For you ſee it is perfectly reaſonable in its Fund and Principle, and does at laſt reſolve, as much as any Mathematical Concluſion, into a rational ground of unqueſtionable Light and Evidence. With this only difference that a Concluſion in Geometry is founded upon a Ground taken from *within*, from the intrinſic Nature of the thing, whereas our Concluſion of Faith proceeds upon a ground taken from *without*, *viz.* from the Authority of God, but ſuch as however in Light and Evidence is no way inferiour to the other.

15. This by the way may ſerve to ſhew the vanity and impertinence of thoſe who when they are to prove that there is nothing in Chriſtianity above Reaſon, run out into a Popular Vein of Harangue about the Reaſonables of the Chriſtian Religion

gion and its great Accommodation to Human Nature, crying out with repeated importunity that Man is a Reaſonable Creature, Chriſtianity a reaſonable Service, and Faith a Rational Act, nay even the *Higheſt Reaſon*, and the like. As if we were for a Blind and unaccountable Faith, and denied the uſe of Reaſon in Religion, or that Faith was founded upon Reaſon. Or as if becauſe there is a Reaſon from *without* for Believing, therefore the thing Believ'd might not from *within*, and as to the inward Matter of it be above Reaſon, ſo as not to be comprehended or accounted for by it. But this will croſs my way again in another place, and therefore I ſhall not anticipate here what further Conſiderations I may have occaſion to beſtow upon it there. Chap. 7. Artic. 9.

16. To return therefore, I ſay that this Obſcurity and inevidence that is in Faith, and upon whoſe account it is commonly ſaid to be an inevident Aſſent, does not belong to its formal Reaſon (which you ſee may be clear enough, as clear as any Principle of Natural Science) but only

only to the Matter or Object of it. That is, in other words the inevidence does not lie in the Reaſon of Believing, but in the Nature of the thing Believ'd. Not that the matter of Faith again is wholy and all over without Evidence (for then there would be no reaſon to believe it) but only that it has no evidence from within, and from the Nature of the thing it ſelf, as was remarqu'd before. Not that this again is ſo to be underſtood neither as if the Propoſition to be believ'd were not ſo much as ſimply intelligible as to the very litteral ſenſe and direct ſignification of its Terms. No, we are no more to believe we Know not *what*, than to believe we Know not *why*, and whatever Darkneſs there may be in Faith, it is ſtill ſo much a Luminous Aſſent, and an Act of Reaſon, as to require that we underſtand the ſimple Meaning of the Propoſition we are to believe, as well as the Grounds of Credibility upon which it Challenges our Aſſent. For the general Object of Faith is Truth, and Truth is the relation of Connexion between Ideas, I ſay Ideas, for

for Truth does not lie in Sounds or Words but in Things. Therefore to believe ſuch a Thing to be True is the ſame as to believe that there is a Connexion between ſuch Ideas. But then a Man muſt know what thoſe Ideas are, or elſe how can he believe they are connected. Therefore he muſt underſtand ſomething more than the Terms themſelves, he muſt alſo have the Ideas of thoſe Terms, which is the ſame as to underſtand the Meaning and Signification of them. And indeed he that has no Idea or Conception of what he believes, believes he knows not what, and he that believes he knows not what cannot be properly ſaid to believe any thing. In all Faith therefore the Propoſition Muſt be ſimply intelligible, and though the *Truth* of it be to be *Believ'd*, yet the *Meaning* of it muſt be *underſtood*.

17. For we are again Carefully to diſtinguiſh between the *Meaning* of a Propoſition, and the *Truth* of a Propoſition. The meaning of a Propoſition is only the Determination of the Ideas that are ſignified by ſuch Terms; the Truth of it is the Union

Union or Connexion that is between thoſe Ideas. Now though a Man does not ſee the Connexion that is between the Ideas of that Propoſition he is ſaid to Believe, yet he muſt in ſome meaſure perceive the Ideas themſelves, becauſe in believing the Propoſition he is ſuppoſed to believe that ſuch Ideas are ſo related and Connected together. When therefore 'tis ſaid that the Matter of Faith is inevident as to the intrinſic Nature of the thing, the inevidence muſt not be thought to lie in the Ideas whereof the Propoſition to be Believ'd Conſiſts, but in the Connexion of thoſe Ideas, that is, not in the *Meaning* of the Propoſition, but in the Truth of it, which is properly the Object of Faith, as the Ideas themſelves are of Perception. Which again by the way may ſerve to diſcover another Inſtance of Impertinency in the Reaſoning of thoſe, who when they are Maintaining that there can be no Article of Faith above Reaſon, divert into pompous Flouriſhes and Declamations about the Intelligibility of the Objects of Faith, and the utter impoſſibility

poſſibility of Believing what is not intelligible. As if we denied the ſimple intelligibility of the Propoſition, or would have Men believe they know not what (which certainly would be a ſtrange degree of Implicit Faith, and more Nonſenſical than that of the *Collier*) or, as if that Propoſition which is clear enough as to its ſimple *Meaning* might not be inevident, and ſo above Reaſon, as to its Truth, or in other words, as if Clearneſs of Ideas might not conſiſt with Obſcurity of their Connexion.

18. But then it muſt be obſerv'd again that when we ſay that the Inevidence that is in the Matter of Faith reſpects the *Truth* of the Propoſition not the *Meaning* of it, or the Connexion of the Ideas, and not the very Ideas themſelves, this is not ſo to be underſtood neither as if the Matter of Faith even thus conſider'd, were Abſolutely, and in its ſelf neceſſarily inevident, and ſuch as could not poſſibly be known without altering its Nature, and ceaſing to be any longer the Object of Faith. I know the contrary Suppoſition has pre-

prevail'd in ſome Schools, where it paſſes almoſt for *Principle* and *Maxim* that Knowledge and Faith are mutually Excluſive of each other, that the ſame thing cannot be at once the Object of both, and that therefore if a thing be believ'd it cannot be known, and if known that it cannot be believ'd. St. *Auſtin* was of this Opinion, and has in many places declared his mind to this purpoſe, particularly in his XL Treatiſe of his Expoſition upon St. *John*'s Goſpel. And his Authority has recommended it (as it did moſt other things) to ſeveral of the Schoolmen, particularly *Aquinas*, whence it has been tranſmitted down among many Modern Writers of the Syſtematical way, both Philoſophers and Divines. But we muſt follow Reaſon before Authority, and whoever can be prevail'd with to lay the latter quite aſide, and to uſe the other as he ought, will I believe clearly perceive that nothing hinders but that the ſame Propoſition may be at once the Object of both Faith and Science, or that the Same thing may be at the ſame time both *Known* and *Believ'd*,

Tom. 9. p. 107.

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provided it be by different Mediums, according to the diverſity of the reſpective Acts.

19. For, not to enter into the wrangle and Duſt of the Schools upon this Occaſion, it may be ſufficient to conſider that there is no manner of Oppoſition between Faith and Knowledge, or the Moſt evident Aſſent as to the Eſſence of the Propoſition (that being not ſuppoſed to be denied in the one which is Affirm'd in the other, or the contrary) but only as to the Medium of the Act. And that 'tis not the Abſolute Nature of the thing Believ'd, but the Quality of the Motive that ſpecifies Faith, and diſtinguiſhes it from other Aſſents. So that 'tis no matter what the Abſolute Nature of the thing be in it ſelf, whether it be evident or not evident, Knowable or not Knowable, provided it be aſſented to upon the proper Medium and Motive of Faith, that is upon Authority, without any reſpect had to the Natural evidence of the thing, though otherwiſe never ſo evident in its own Abſolute Nature, ſo as to be the Object of Science (though upon

upon a different Medium) at the ſame time. For as I ſaid before, 'tis not the Nature of the thing, but the Quality of the Medium that ſpecifies Faith, and tho' the ſame thing cannot have two Natures, or be in it ſelf at once evident and not evident, yet why may it not ſuſtain two different Relations, or be conſider'd in two different Mediums, ſo as to be ſaid to be known when perceiv'd by its Evidence, and to be believ'd when aſſented to upon Authority? Which certainly may be done as fully, and with as little regard to its evidence, as if there were no evidence in the thing at all. So that the Evidence of the thing does not hinder the Belief of it, ſuppoſing the Belief not to proceed upon that Evidence, but upon its own proper Medium, Authority.

20. But to uſe a way of Arguing leſs Abſtract, though it may be with ſome more preſſing and convincing. Suppoſe God ſhould reveal to me a *Geometrical* Truth, as that two Triangles having the ſame Baſe, and being within the ſame Parallels, are equal, and I who at firſt receiv'd

it upon his bare Authority ſhould come afterwards to be able to demonſtrate it my ſelf upon the known Principles of Art, who that well conſiders the Natures of theſe things would ſay that my Science evacuated my Faith, and that I ceas'd to be a Believer aſſoon as I became a *Mathematician*? For though I am now ſuppoſed to *Know* what before I only *Believ'd*, yet why ſhould this Knowledge deſtroy my Faith, ſince I may ſtill have as much regard for the Authority of God, and as little to the Evidence of the thing as I had before the Demonſtration, and would ſtill be ready to aſſent to it though there were no evidence to be produced for it, only upon the Ground of Divine Authority. And, to uſe another Senſible though not ſo Artificial way of arguing, I would fain know whether any one of thoſe who are of the Contrary Sentiment would refuſe a Demonſtrative Account of a Reveal'd Truth, ſuppoſe the Creation of the World, merely for fear of injuring or deſtroying his Faith, which yet he were bound in Conſcience to do, if Knowledge and

Faith were ſo excluſive of each other, and inevidence and Obſcurity were ſo abſolutely of the Eſſence of Faith as ſome pretend. For then it would not be lawful to acquire the Natural Knowledge of any reveal'd Truth, becauſe 'tis unlawful to deſtroy one's Faith, and every Believer would have juſt reaſon to fear all further Light and Information about what he believes, which yet I think would be acknowledg'd by all an extravagant Scruple, ſuch as can hardly enter, much leſs ſtay long in any Conſidering head; And is withal Contrary to a plain Exhortation of the Apoſtle, who bids us add to our Faith *Knowledge*.

2 Pet. 5.

21. When therefore the Matter of Faith, as it is taken for the Truth of the Propoſition Believ'd, is charged with Obſcurity, and Faith it ſelf upon that account is ſaid (as it commonly is) to be of inevident things, the Meaning ought not to be of an *Abſolute*, but of a *Relative* inevidence. Not that what is Believ'd is ſo all over dark and obſcure that it cannot (while Believ'd) abſolutely be known, but only that it cannot

cannot under that Formality, and ſo far as it is Believ'd, being neceſſarily in that reſpect inevident, how bright or clear ſoever it may be in other reſpects. That is in other words, though the thing Believ'd abſolutely conſider'd may be Evident, yet it is not ſo as Believ'd, or in relation to Faith, becauſe that has no *regard* to the Evidence how bright ſoever it may ſhine, but proceeds wholy upon another Argument, between which and the Evidence of the thing there is not the leaſt Affinity or Communication. The ſhort is, the Object of Faith ſimply and abſolutely ſpeaking may admit of Evidence, but then though it be never ſo evident and demonſtrable in it ſelf, yet as Believ'd it is always Obſcure, Faith having no regard to the proper light and Evidence of the thing, but only to the Teſtimony of the Revealer, whoſe bare Authority is the only Motive that determines her Aſſent, and the only Ground upon which ſhe lays the whole weight of it, though the Truth of the thing in it ſelf abſolutely Conſider'd, may alſo ſtand

upon other Foundations, be rationally accounted for by Arguments from *within*, and ſo be ſeen by its own Light. But let the Light ſhine never ſo bright upon the Object from other ſides, Faith lets in none, nor has any regard to that which ſhe finds there, but connives at it, and walks (as I may ſay) with her eyes ſhut, contenting her ſelf with the certainty of Revelation, and leaving to Science (if there be any) the Evidence of the thing. So that the Object is always dark to her, how clear and bright ſoever it may be in it ſelf, or appear, when abſolutely conſider'd, to a Philoſophic Eye. In which reſpect it falls very ſhort of the Perfection of Science, though in reſpect of Firmneſs and Certainty it be equal to it, as was ſaid before. All which is briefly couch'd in that excellent Account of Faith given by the Author to the *Hebrews*, when he ſays, that it is the *Subſtance of things hoped for, and the Argument of things not ſeen.* Where by *Subſtance* and *Argument* he equals it with Science in regard of the Firmneſs and Certainty of the Aſſent, but by ſaying

Heb. 11. 1.

ſaying that 'tis *of things not ſeen* he makes it vail and ſtoop to it in point of Evidence, in which reſpect indeed Faith, as Firm and as Certain as it is, is as much inferiour to Science, as Darkneſs is to Light.

22. To gather up then what has been here diſcours'd at large concerning the inevidence of Faith into one view. When we ſay that Faith is an inevident Aſſent we are not to underſtand this inevidence of the formal Reaſon of Faith, but of the Matter of it. And when we ſay that the Matter of it is inevident, we ſhould not intend by it that it is wholy and all over without Evidence, but only that it has none from *within* or from the intrinſic Nature of the thing. And when we ſay that the Matter of Faith is inevident from *within*, this again is not to be intended of the ſimple Meaning of the Propoſition, but of the Truth of it. And when we ſay that the Truth of it is inevident, this again laſtly is not to be underſtood, as if it were always and neceſſarily ſo in its own Abſolute Nature, but only ſo far forth as it is Believ'd, or

as 'tis conſider'd under the formality of an Object of Faith. Or in other words, the inevidence of the Matter of Faith in reſpect of the Truth of the Article is not an *Abſolute* but a *Relative* inevidence. Not that the Matter of Faith is Never Abſolutely and in the Nature of the thing inevident (for it may be ſo too as will be ſeen afterwards) but only that it is not *neceſſarily* ſo, there being no reaſon from the Nature of Faith that requires it ſhould, which may conſiſt with Evidence, though it proceeds not upon it, and has no regard to it as a Motive. So then the formal Reaſon of Faith is always Clear, the Matter of it Abſolutely conſider'd may be clear or not clear, as it happens, according as the Nature of the thing is, but as *Believ'd*, or as Conſider'd under the formality of being the Object of Faith ſo it is always inevident and Obſcure, as being not ſuppoſed to be aſſented to for the ſake of its Evidence (even when it has any) but wholy upon another Account, already ſufficiently repreſented.

23. And

23. And thus having ſtruck ſome Light into the Darkneſs of Faith, by ſtating and explaining with what exactneſs I could in what Senſe it is an *inevident Aſſent*, I cannot forbear Obſerving by the way (though a little of the ſooneſt) of what Service this Account may be towards the grand Queſtion of Believing things above Reaſon. For if Faith be an inevident Aſſent ſo far at leaſt as not to reſpect the Evidence of its Object, why may not a thing be believ'd though it be above Reaſon? For what though it be above Reaſon, is it therefore above *Faith*? Has Faith any regard to Evidence? Or is it determin'd by any Rational Motive, I mean that is taken from the Nature of the Object? Even when a thing is evident, Faith is not ſuppoſed to aſſent to it becauſe of its Evidence, and why then may not a thing be believ'd though it be not evident? Some Contend that Faith and Evidence cannot poſſibly conſiſt together, and according to them Not only what is inevident may be believ'd, but whatever is believ'd muſt be inevident. But this I look

upon, and have already ſhewn to be a Miſtake. And 'tis a Miſtake in the Extremity too. For I take it to be every whit as much an Extreme to ſay that the Object of Faith is always inevident, as to ſay that it is always evident. However, it is always inevident *ſo far as Believ'd*, which is the Middle Point between the two extremes. The Nature of Faith requires at leaſt this *Relative* inevidence of the Object, whatever it be in its own Nature, and we need no More. For if the Object of Faith be alwayes inevident ſo far as Believ'd, then will it not follow that it May be believ'd though inevident? For my part I ſee nothing that ſhould hinder this Conſequence, if the Principle it proceeds upon be right. The Principle is (and a very moderate one ſure, the generality of Writers ſtraining the Matter a great deal higher) that the Object of Faith is inevident as far as Believ'd. The Conſequence is, that therefore a thing may be believ'd, though inevident. 'Tis true indeed one of theſe is an Abſolute, and the other only a Relative inevidence. But this ſignifies Nothing

Nothing to the Argument. For why may not a thing really and in it ſelf inevident be believ'd, when even that which is Evident is Conſider'd by Faith as inevident? Why, then 'tis all one (as to Faith) as if it were ſo indeed; For what does the Evidence ſignify, or what real alteration does it make, if Faith has no regard to it, nor Conſideration of it? And what ſhould hinder then but that a thing really inevident may be believ'd, eſpecial if reveal'd by God himſelf, and concerning himſelf. The ſhort is, Faith as *Faith* has no *regard* to Evidence (I mean that of the thing) and Faith as *Divine* has no *need* of it, and therefore why an inevident thing may not be believ'd is what I do not underſtand, and would be glad to Learn.

24. But to return (for I look upon this as too much a digreſſion from the preſent, and too much a Prevention of what is to follow to be further purſued) after having thus diſcours'd of the Nature of Faith in General, and the double Diſtribution of it into Humane and Divine, with proper Conſiderations upon each of them,

it

it remains that it be now further conſider'd that each of theſe may be either *Explicit* or *Implicit*. Then we are ſaid to believe *Explicitly*, when we believe determinately ſuch or ſuch a thing in particular, diſtinctly knowing what that Particular thing is. And then *Implicitly*, when we believe indeterminately and at large whatever is propoſed to us by ſuch an Authority, not knowing what in particular is propoſed, or what it is we Believe. Which though it ſeems to carry the Appearance of an Aſſent too blind and hood-winkt to be the act of a Reaſonable Creature, may yet in its proper place become him as much as the other, and indeed is every whit as rational an Aſſent in its Ground and Principle. For all Explicit Faith is founded upon Implicit, and has Implicit Faith in it.

25. To underſtand both this and the Nature of Implicit Faith the better we are to Conſider (what has been already intimated) that Faith proceeds upon Premiſſes, as well as *Science*, and is the Concluſion of a Syllogiſm. And I further Note (what

(what perhaps may not be unworthy the Obſervation of the Curious) that the Major Propoſition in Faith Explicit is the Concluſion in Faith Implicit, as may be ſeen in the Syllogiſm before ſet down.

Whatever is reveal'd by God is true,
This is Reveal'd by God,
Therefore this is true.

The Major Propoſition here (whatever is reveal'd by God is true) is the Concluſion of Implicit Faith, whoſe act is as much to believe to be true whatever God reveals, as the act of Explicit Faith is to believe that this or that in particular is ſo. So that Explicit Faith proceeds upon Implicit, borrows from it its Concluſion for its Principle, and begins where the other leaves off. Juſt as in the *Subalternation* of Sciences, that which is a Concluſion in one is a Principle in the other, ſo 'tis here in the Subalternation of theſe two Faiths, whereof that which is Explicit may be ſaid to be Subalternated to that which is Implicit. Let not any therefore vilify or diſparage Implicit

plicit Faith as a blind and irrational Aſſent, ſince it lays a ground for Explicit, which ſerves it ſelf of it, uſing its Concluſion as a Principle, even as what is a Concluſion in *Geometry* is a Principle in *Perſpective*. And as Geometry is therefore accounted the Superiour Science, ſo ought implicit Faith to be reckon'd as the Superiour Faith, upon whoſe Concluſion the other proceeds, and which it ſelf proceeds thus,

Whatever is reveal'd by him that is Infallible is true,
God is Infallible,
Therefore whatever is reveal'd by God is true.

Here beſides that 'tis plain to be ſeen that the Concluſion of this laſt Syllogiſm is the Principle of the precedent One, and that Explicit Faith *ſuppoſes* what is *proved* in Implicit, it may be further noted that Implicit Faith (as being the higheſt degree of Faith) is due only to the higheſt, that is, to an Infallible Authority, the reaſon why whatever is reveal'd by

by God is here Concluded to be true, being, becauſe he is infallible. Infallibility then is the proper ground of Implicit Faith, and accordingly the Church of *Rome* aſſuming to her ſelf the Character of *Infallible*, does upon that Suppoſition rightly require it. I ſay upon that ſuppoſition, for ſhe is right enough in her Conſequence, ſuppoſing her Principle to be true. But the truth of it is, that is Moſt Extravagant, and ſuch as carries in it ſuch matchleſs Arrogance and Preſumption as befits only him *who as God ſitteth in the temple of God, ſhewing himſelf that he is God.* 2 Theſ. 2. 4. For God only is Infallible, and therefore he only has right to require Implicit Faith. And to him indeed it is due from every one of his Creatures in the higheſt Meaſure imaginable, as is alſo *Implicit Obedience* upon the ſame Ground. Of both which we have a ſignal Example in *Abraham*, who when he was call'd by God to go out into a place which he ſhould after receive for an Inheritance, is ſaid *by Faith to have Obey'd, and to have* Heb. 11. 8.

have gone out, not knowing whither he went.

26. But now what can be more dark and inevident than this Implicit Faith? Its Formal Reaſon indeed is ſufficiently clear, and it reſolves at laſt into a Ground highly Rational, and ſo may be ſaid in that reſpect to be the higheſt Reaſon. For certainly nothing can be more Reaſonable than to believe whatever God (who is Infallible) reveals. There is therefore no Darkneſs on this Side. Nay even the Light it ſelf does not ſhine more Clear. But as for the *Matter* of it (if I may call it ſo where nothing diſtinctly is believ'd) that is ſure as dark and obſcure as can well be conceiv'd, ſo dark as even to be *Inviſible*. For a Man to believe at large without any reſtriction or limitation whatever God ſhall propoſe to him, let it be what it will, not Knowing what that is (like *Abraham*'s going, *not knowing whither he went*) is ſuch a dark and obſcure act of Faith as has nothing clear in it but the Humility and Devotion of him who ſo

ſo believes. This is a Faith Worthy of God, as well as peculiar to him, and 'tis the great inevidence and obſcurity of it that makes it ſo. For ſo far is the Matter of it from having any Evidence in it, that it is not ſo much as Evident what the Matter of it is. Here then is the very Blackneſs of Darkneſs, and he that has this *infolded* Faith (as every true Believer has) and can thus truſt God in the Dark, where he ſees nothing but only the general Reaſon of his ſo doing, is not likely in any of the more explicit inſtances of it to plead the inevidence of the Article to excuſe his Infidelity, or to deny his Faith to an otherwiſe ſufficiently clear Revelation, merely becauſe it is above his ſhallow Reaſon.

27. Upon what has been hitherto diſcours'd it will not be difficult to give in *few* words a Satisfactory Reſolution of a Celebrated Queſtion which among the Schoolmen has made a great *many*, and that is, whether Faith belongs to the *Underſtanding* or to the *Will*: It is plain

plain by the Meaſures already laid down that it belongs to the Latter. For Faith (as all acknowledge) is an Aſſent, and Aſſent is a Species of Judgement, and Judgement (as has been ſhewn already) is an act of the Will, not of the Underſtanding, whoſe only Operation is Perception, and conſequently Faith is an act of the Will conſenting to, imbracing, acquieſcing and repoſing it ſelf in what the Underſtanding repreſents as propoſed and reveal'd by God. And indeed unleſs Judgment and conſequently Faith did belong to the Will as their proper and immediate Principle, 'tis impoſſible to Conceive how a Man ſhould be blame-worthy for any of his Opinions, or how he ſhould ſtand accountable either for Error on the one hand, or for Infidelity and Hereſy on the other. For if Faith be an act of the Underſtanding then ſince the only Operation of the Underſtanding is Perception, the greateſt Fault of an Infidel or a Heretic will be Non-Perception, which indeed is not

Error

Error but *Ignorance*, whereas Infidelity and Hereſie are always ſuppoſed to include Error, and to be alſo the worſt of Errors. And this Non-perception is only a Negation, and ſuch as reſolves into want of Parts, which is not a Moral but a Natural defect, whereas Infidelity and Hereſie (as indeed all that is Faulty) are underſtood to be Privations, and Defects of a Moral Nature. But then to make them ſo they muſt be voluntary (nothing being faulty but what is ſo) that is again they muſt be *Wilful*, that is, they muſt be acts of the Will, and Conſequently Faith which is the Habit whereof thoſe Sins are Privations, muſt alſo belong to the ſame Principle, or elſe in ſhort there would be neither Vertue in having it, nor Vice in being without it. And accordingly our Saviour in upbraiding the *Jews* with Infidelity does all along not only by Conſequence, but directly and expreſly, Charge it upon their Wills: *Ye will not come to me, that ye may have Life.* Joh. 5. 40.

28. And thus I have gone thorough what I intended, and what indeed is of greateſt Conſideration, upon this Subject of Faith. In the account of which if I differ from any Authors of the better Character that have either profeſſedly or occaſionally written upon it, particularly *Baronius* and Dr. *Pearſon*, 'tis not that I love to lay aſide great Authorities, or affect to be by my ſelf, but becauſe I follow the beſt Light of my Underſtanding, write with Freedom and Ingenuity what I think, and endeavour to repreſent things as they are, without having regard to Authority any further than I think it joyn'd with Truth and Reaſon. Which ſhall alſo be my Rule in what remains of this Treatiſe. In the Mean time what has been hitherto diſcours'd concerning Reaſon and Faith may ſerve as a good Preparation in order to an Account of the Great Queſtion Concerning the Belief of things above Reaſon. But before we enter upon

on any thing of that Nature, 'tis fit the Diſtinction of *Above Reaſon*, and *Contrary to Reaſon* be Conſider'd and rightly Stated, which is the task allotted for the next Chapter.

CHAP. III.

The Distinction of things Contrary to Reason, and above Reason, Consider'd.

1. THere are some Distinctions in the World that are without a Difference, though Difference be the Ground of all Distinction, and this by some is pretended to be of that Number, who will have the Parts of it to be Coincident, and that *Contrary to Reason* and *above Reason* signifie in reality alike, and are but different Expressions for one and the same thing. And though they may be reasonably suspected to do this to serve the interest of a Cause for whose advantage it would be to have this Distinction taken away, yet they have the Confidence to Charge the same upon those that hold it, pretending that it is only a dextrous Shift and Evasion invented by

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by Subtile Men as an Expedient to relieve the Diſtreſs of a deſperate Argument, when there is nothing elſe to be ſaid for it.

2. Which of theſe is the Evaſion, either the denying or the allowing this Diſtinction, will beſt appear by the Examination of it, which, beſides its Serviceableneſs to our Clearer proceeding in what we are now upon, I am the rather induced to undertake, becauſe (as Mr. *Boyle* Obſerves in a little Treatiſe upon this Subject) *there are divers that employ this Diſtinction, few that have attempted to explain it, and none that has taken care to juſtifie it.* Indeed He himſelf is the only Perſon that I know of that has written profeſſedly about it (and I cannot but wonder that a thing of ſuch Curioſity and Importance ſhould be ſo little Conſider'd) though I think he has not gone to the Bottom of the Subject, nor is ſufficiently clear even as far as he goes. However becauſe he has ſome Conſiderable Obſervations upon it (as indeed his Thoughts are generally very good) and there is no reaſon why we

ſhould refuſe any additional Light in ſo dark and untrodden a way, I ſhall for the further advantage and illuſtration of the Matter firſt draw up into a ſhort view what that Excellent Perſon has Meditated concerning it, with ſuch Occaſional Remarques as I ſhall think neceſſary, and then proceed to ſtate the thing according to my own Conceptions, hoping that between us both it will be ſufficiently clear'd, and that nothing of any Conſequence will be overlook'd that belongs to the Conſideration of this ſo little conſider'd, and almoſt *Virgin* Subject.

3. To give you then in the firſt place the Sum of Mr. *Boyle*'s Account, He propoſes in general two things. 1. To declare in what ſenſe the Diſtinction is to be underſtood. 2. To prove that it is not an Arbitrary or illuſory Diſtinction, but grounded upon the Nature of things. As to the firſt he tells you that by things *Above Reaſon* he Conceives ſuch Notions and Propoſitions as Mere Reaſon, that is, unaſſiſted by Revelation would never have

have diſcover'd to us, whether thoſe things be to our Finite Capacities clearly comprehenſible or not. And that by things *Contrary to Reaſon* he underſtands ſuch Conceptions and Propoſitions as are not only undiſcoverable by mere Reaſon, but ſuch as when we do underſtand them do evidently appear repugnant to ſome Principle, or to ſome Concluſion of right Reaſon.

4. Now before I go any further I would here by this great Man's leave, and with due deference to his high Character, remarque, that though things undiſcoverable by mere Reaſon without Revelation may in a Certain ſenſe be ſaid to be *above Reaſon*, in as much as they ſurpaſs the Natural ability of the Underſtanding to make the firſt Diſcovery of them, yet this is not what Divines mean by *Above Reaſon* as they uſe the Phraſe in this Diſtinction, oppoſing it to *Contrary to Reaſon*. For this Diſtinction was intended againſt the *Socinians*, who generally reject the Myſteries of Faith as contrary to Senſe and Reaſon, to which we reply that they

are not *Contrary* to Reaſon but on" ly *Above* it. They cry out that this is no Diſtinction, but a mere Shift and Evaſion, pretending that the Parts of it fall in together, and that what is above Reaſon is alſo contrary to it, and therefore not to be believ'd. Now 'tis moſt plain that both they that uſe this Diſtinction, and they againſt whom it is uſed do not. Mean by *things Above Reaſon* ſuch as are beyond the firſt invention or Diſcovery of it. For beſides that to mean that our Myſteries are only *undiſcoverable* when we ſay they are above Reaſon, would be too little a thing to oppoſe to *Contrary* to *Reaſon*, it is alſo too little a thing to intend by Myſtery, ſince though the undiſcoverableneſs of them by Reaſon might be a ſufficient ground of their being ſo call'd before their Revelation, it can be none now after they are reveal'd. And therefore if we ſay of theſe Myſteries now that they are above Reaſon, we cannot be preſumed to intend it in reſpect of their *undiſcoverableneſs*. And 'tis as plain that that our Adverſaries do not ſo underſtand

deſtand us. For they deny that things above Reaſon are to be believ'd, and that becauſe (according to them) above Reaſon and contrary to Reaſon are all one. But now no *Socinian* that underſtands his own Principle would deny the Credibility of things above Reaſon, as that ſignifies only *undiſcoverable* by Reaſon alone, much leſs would he ſay that what is above Reaſon (in that Senſe) is alſo contrary to it. No, without doubt they will in this ſenſe both allow us the Diſtinction, and the Myſteries (if they may be ſo call'd) that are built upon it. But then this plainly ſhews that they do not underſtand it in this Senſe, any more than we.

5. Inſtead therefore of ſaying *undiſcoverable*, he ſhould have ſaid *incomprehenſible* by Reaſon. Into which he ſlips unawares in the account of the other part of the Diſtinction, *things Contrary to Reaſon*, by ſaying that they are ſuch as when we *do* underſtand them do appear repugnant, &c. which plainly implies that the former things that were ſaid to be above Reaſon are ſuch as we do

not

not underſtand, even when diſcover'd, and not ſuch as we are not able only to Diſcover, ſince otherwiſe there will be no Antitheſis in the Second part, in which there is nothing amiſs except thoſe words *as are not only undiſcoverable*, which in my judgment ought to be expung'd as the Production of the firſt Miſtake.

6. Mr. *Boyle* proceeds to illuſtrate his Explanation of this Diſtinction by a Compariſon drawn from Sight. He ſuppoſes a Man to be askt by a Diver what he could ſee in a deep Sea. To which the Man is ſuppoſed to reply that he could ſee into a Sea-green Liquor to the depth of ſome yards and no further. So that if further ask't if he could ſee what lies at the Bottom of the Sea, his Anſwer no doubt would be in the Negative. But then if the Diver ſhould let himſelf down to the Bottom and bring up thence and ſhew him Oyſters or Muſcles with Pearls in them, he would eaſily acknowledge both that they lay beyond the reach of his Sight, and that the Pearls were Genuin and Good. But

if

if the Diver ſhould further pretend that each of theſe Pearls was bigger than the Shells they were contain'd in, this would be thought not only undiſcernible by the Eyes, but contrary to their Informations, and to admit this would argue the Sight not only to be imperfect, but falſe and deluſory, and accordingly 'tis preſum'd that *this* he would not admit.

7. Now I not only allow this Compariſon, but even admire it for the ſingular Aptneſs and Pertinency of it to illuſtrate, even to the Senſe, the difference between things above and things contrary to Reaſon, only I think it ſeems to proceed upon the ſuppoſition that by things above Reaſon are meant ſuch only as are *incomprehenſible* by it, which certainly would make the Compariſon much more Appoſite and Exact. Whereof he himſelf appears ſenſible at the end of it, where offering to conſider the Matter more diſtinctly, he tells you that the things above Reaſon are not all of one ſort, but may be diſtinguiſh'd into two kinds ſufficiently differing from each other.

Which

which he makes to be theſe, that there are ſome things that Reaſon by its own Light cannot *Diſcover*. And others, that, when propoſed it cannot *Comprehend*. This indeed is true, but then he ſhould have ſaid ſo ſooner, and have told us withal that by things above Reaſon (as the Phraſe is uſed in this Diſtinction) he meant the Latter Sort only, the Former not being to the Purpoſe.

8. However he proceeds upon that part Firſt, that is, to ſhew that there are divers Truths in the Chriſtian Religion that Reaſon left to it ſelf would never have been able to find out. Of which he gives ſeveral Inſtances, which as not being to the Point, I paſs over, and come to his other Conſideration of things above Reaſon, meaning ſuch as when propoſed do ſurpaſs our Comprehenſion, and that (as he well obſerves) upon one or other of theſe three Accounts, either as not clearly *Conceivable* by our underſtanding, ſuch as the Infiniteneſs of the Divine Nature, or as *inexplicable* by us, ſuch as the Manner how God can Create

Create a Rational Soul, or how this being an Immaterial Subſtance can act upon a Human Body, or be acted upon by it, &c. Or elſe laſtly as *Aſymmetrical* or unſociable, that is, ſuch, as we ſee not how to reconcile with other things evidently and confeſſedly true, whereof he gives an inſtance in the Caſe of Preſcience and Contingency.

9. He further obſerves (and I think rightly) that there may be difference of degree in things above Reaſon, as to their Abſtruſeneſs. That ſome things appear to ſurpaſs our underſtandings immediately, even before attentively lookt into. And other things only when a narrow inſpection is made into them, being intelligible enough in the Groſs, and as imploy'd in common Diſcourſe. Whereof he gives inſtances in *Place*, *Time*, and *Motion*. And he makes uſe of this Obſervation to ſolve a Difficulty wherein it is pretended that we cannot profeſs to believe things which we acknowledge to be above our Reaſon, without diſcovering that we do not well conſider what we ſay, and that we then

then talk like Parrots. To which the ſubſtance of his Anſwer is, that we may talk of thoſe things according to that Notion of them which is more Obvious and Superficial, though not according to that which is Philoſophical and Accurate.

10. After this Explanation of what is meant by Above Reaſon and contrary to Reaſon he comes in the Second place to juſtify the Diſtinction by ſhewing that it is grounded upon the Nature of things. And that he does by ſhewing that there is no Neceſſity that things above Reaſon ſhould be alſo Contrary to Reaſon. This he ſhews firſt of things above Reaſon in the firſt Senſe, *viz.* thoſe that are undiſcoverable by Reaſon alone, but this being not the ſenſe of Above Reaſon as it is uſed in this Diſtinction, and ſince things according to this ſenſe above Reaſon are not affirm'd by our Adverſaries to be contrary to it, I paſs over all that he ſays upon this part, and ſtrike in with him again where he ſhews the ſame of things above Reaſon in the Second ſenſe. I cannot meet with any thing

thing directly under that Head, but only a few Paſſages here and there ſcatter'd up and down. As when he ſays of *Galileo*, that when he firſt made his Diſcoveries with the *Teleſcope* and ſaid that there were Planets that mov'd about *Jupiter*, He ſaid ſomething that other Aſtronomers could not diſcern to be true, but nothing that they could prove to be falſe. And again when he ſays that for a thing to be above Reaſon is Extrinſecal and Accidental to its being true or falſe. Becauſe to be above our Reaſon is not an Abſolute thing, but a Reſpective One, importing a Relation to the Meaſure of Knowledge that belongs to Human underſtanding. And therefore it may not be above Reaſon in reference to a more inlightned Intellect &c. which indeed is rightly and very judiciouſly remarqu'd in it ſelf, and no leſs pertinently to the preſent buſineſs. And again when he ſays that there are ſome things true which yet are liable to Objections not directly anſwerable, and ſo above Reaſon. He inſtances in the Controverſie of the Divi-

Diviſibility of Quantity, where each ſide of the Contradiction is preſs'd with unanſwerable Objections, and yet as parts of a Contradiction, one of them muſt neceſſarily be true. And yet take which you will you run into invincible Difficulties. Which indeed well concludes that a thing that is above Reaſon may yet be true, and if true then not contrary to Reaſon, it being impoſſible that what is ſo ſhould be true. Which one Conſideration is indeed enough to juſtifie the Diſtinction beyond all exception.

11. Mr. *Boyle* has yet a further Obſervation concerning this Diſtinction too Conſiderable to be paſs'd over, and that is, that he looks upon it to be of Importance not only to the defence of ſome Myſteries of the Chriſtian Religion, but even of ſome important Articles of Natural Theology, in which (as he ſhews by ſeveral Inſtances) there are many Doctrins which muſt be acknowledg'd to be true, and yet whoſe *Modus* is not explainable.

12. After

12. After this he Conſiders an Objection wherein it is pretended that the granting this Diſtinction would be of bad Conſequence, as affording ſhelter to any unintelligible ſtuff that a bold Enthuſiaſt may obtrude under the venerable Title of a *Myſtery*, that is above Reaſon. To which he anſwers very judiciouſly, that he does not deny but that the Diſtinction is liable to be ill imploy'd, but that this is no other than what is common to it with divers other Diſtinctions, which are without Scruple Admitted becauſe uſeful, and not rejected becauſe they have not the Priviledge that they can never be Miſapplied. And that therefore both in reference to thoſe other Diſtinctions, and that he had been treating of, it becomes Men to ſtand upon their Guard, and ſtrictly examine how far the Doctrine propoſed as a *Myſtery*, is intitled to the benefit of this Diſtinction. Which if it ſhould be employ'd to juſtifie any thing, that, though ſtyl'd a Myſtery, is but a pretended one, the Errour (as he well obſerves in the Cloſe of all) will lye, Not

in the Groundleſneſs of the Diſtinction, but in the Erroneouſneſs of the Application.

12. In this you have the Sum and Subſtance, as briefly and as clearly as I could repreſent it, of Mr. *Boyle*'s Thoughts concerning things above Reaſon and contrary to Reaſon, which, like all his, are great and ſtrong, and (allowing only for thoſe inaccuracies taken Notice of) juſt and true. And now though what this Excellent Perſon has offer'd may ſerve to let in a great deal of Light into the Diſtinction, yet ſince a thing of ſuch Conſequence if true, and ſo much Conteſted whether true or no, can never be made too Clear, and ſometimes a different, though not better, Repreſentation of a thing may contribute to its further Illuſtration, every Reader having his particular *Point of View*, ſo as that the very ſame Notion or Truth that does not Meet with him in one Poſture, may ſhine full in his Face and ſtrike him with ſucceſs in another, I ſhall therefore under the Shelter of Mr. *Boyle*'s Authority, and by the advantage of his Light, venture

venture to set down my own Thoughts concerning this weighty Point, applying my self chiefly to that part of it, wherein I think the other Account Most defective.

14. And first though it should be true that to be above Reason is to be Incomprehensible, and to be Contrary to Reason is to appear repugnant to some Principle or Conclusion of Right Reason, yet I do not think this of it self sufficient either to Clear or to Justifie the Distinction, since it may be both again *demanded* what it is to be incomprehensible, and what repugnant, and again *disputed* whether incomprehensible and repugnant be not the same, as well as whether that which is above Reason be not also Contrary to it. And then we are but where we were before. This Account of the Matter is then too Gross and General to be rested in, and we must be therefore more mintute and particular in our Explanation of it, if we would be more Clear.

15. However since Generals are to go before, and do also prepare the way for Particulars, I shall first pro-

poſe the general Idea of things above Reaſon and contrary to Reaſon, and then particularize upon that Idea, by opening and unfolding more diſtinctly and explicitly what is contain'd in it, and by ſo comparing and collating together the two parts of the Notion as to ſhew the real Difference that is between them. So that I ſhall make but one work of the *Explanatory* and *Juſtificatory* parts, ſuppoſing that there needs no more to the Juſtification of the Diſtinction, than only to have the Members of it well explain'd. For if the Idea of Above Reaſon be diſtinct from the Idea of Contrary to Reaſon (as the Explanation of them will ſhew that it is) then the Diſtinction proceeds upon a real Difference, is grounded upon the Nature of things, and has all that is neceſſary to a true and good Diſtinction.

16. By things above Reaſon then (as the Expreſſion is uſed in this Diſtinction) I conceive to be Meant, Not ſuch as Reaſon of it ſelf cannot Diſcover, but ſuch as when propoſed it cannot Comprehend. And by things Contrary to Reaſon I conceive ſuch

ſuch as it can and does actually comprehend, and that to be abſolutely Impoſſible. Or in other words, a thing is then above Reaſon when we do not comprehend how it can be, and then Contrary to Reaſon when we do poſitively comprehend that it cannot be. Thus in the General.

17. But to be a little more Particular, we are to Conſider upon the firſt Part, that when we ſpeak of things above Reaſon, the word Reaſon here (as was ſhewn in the firſt Chapter) ſignifies the ſame as *Underſtanding*, and there being but one only Operation of that, namely Perception, by *Comprehend* here muſt be meant the ſame as by *Perceive*. So that when we ſay of things above Reaſon that they are ſuch as Reaſon cannot Comprehend, 'tis the ſame as to ſay they are ſuch as the Underſtanding cannot Perceive. But then when we ſay, *Cannot Perceive*, 'tis to be carefully noted that this is not to be underſtood of the literal and Grammatical *Meaning* of the Propoſition, as if the thing ſaid to be *Above Reaſon* were perfectly unintelligible, but only of the *Truth* of it,

as was obſerv'd before concerning Faith. And then again when we ſay that Above Reaſon is when we do not Comprehend or Perceive the Truth of a thing, this muſt not be meant of not Comprehending the Truth in its whole Latitude and Extent, ſo that as many Truths ſhould be ſaid to be above Reaſon as we cannot thus thoroughly comprehend and purſue throughout all their Conſequences and Relations to other Truths (for then almoſt every thing would be Above Reaſon) but only of not comprehending the Union or Connexion of thoſe immediate Ideas of which the Propoſition ſuppoſed to be above Reaſon conſiſts. And which is therefore ſaid to be above Reaſon not becauſe the ſimple and direct Meaning of its Terms is unintelligible, or becauſe the Truth of it is not comprehenſible in its remoteſt and utmoſt Extent, but purely becauſe the Connexion of its Ideas, or the manner of it, is not diſcernible, and that partly for want of ſufficient clearneſs of the Ideas themſelves ſo as to be able to perceive their Union *Intuitively*, and partly for want

of

of a due and proper Medium whereby to compare them, ſo as to diſcern their Union in the way of *Science* and *Demonſtration*.

18. 'Tis alſo to be Obſerv'd upon the Second part of the Explanation, that I chuſe rather to ſay that things contrary to Reaſon are ſuch as we Perceive to be *Impoſſible*, than ſuch as *appear contrary to ſome Principle, or ſome Concluſion of Right Reaſon*. This being the more General and Abſolute Idea, whereof the two other are but Inſtances and Specifications. For then is a thing ſaid to be Impoſſible when its Ideas cannot ſtand together or be united. Which may be either becauſe of the immediate Oppoſition and Inconſiſtency of the Ideas themſelves with themſelves ſo as Mutually to Exclude each other (as in a Contradiction) or becauſe of their inconſiſtency with ſome other Truth, with which it cannot Comport. Or in other words, either becauſe one of the Ideas cannot conſiſt with the other, by reaſon of the immediate oppoſition that is between them, or becauſe the Union of both is inconſiſtent with ſome

Truth or other, which therefore will not ſuffer them to be United. Which Truth will be indeed either a Principle or a Concluſion of right Reaſon. And then we are ſaid to *Perceive* a thing to be Impoſſible when we perceive that its Ideas cannot ſtand together, and that either immediately by the very inconſiſtency of the Ideas themſelves, or mediately by the Repugnance that they carry to ſome other Truth, whether Principle or Concluſion. Which *Repugnance* I take to conſiſt in this, that the ſuppoſed Principle or Concluſion cannot ſtand with the Union of ſuch Ideas, and that therefore if ſuch a Principle or ſuch a Concluſion be true (as is ſuppoſed) then ſuch Ideas are not United, and indeed are as uncapable of Union, that is as *impoſſible*, as if there were an immediate inconſiſtency between the Ideas themſelves. So that for a thing to be Contrary to Reaſon, is, in ſhort, for the Underſtanding to perceive the Abſolute Impoſſibility of it, or that its Ideas cannot ſtand together, which it does either Immediately by perceiving the direct inconſiſtency of

thoſe Ideas, or Mediately by perceiving their inconſiſtency with ſome evident and inconteſtable Truth or other, whether Principle or Concluſion. For the way and method is the ſame in knowing a thing to be Falſe or impoſſible as in knowing it to be True, and accordingly as the Proceſs of the Underſtanding is either Immediate or Mediate in the latter, ſo is it alſo in the Former. But though there are theſe different ways of perceiving the impoſſibility of a thing, 'tis in the General Perception of its Impoſſibility and not in the ſeveral ways of it that its contrariety to Reaſon muſt be made Formally to conſiſt; Even as it was ſhewn before of Knowledge, which is made to conſiſt in the Perception of the Relation of Ideas, and not in this or that determinate manner of perceiving it, which indeed ſerve afterwards to diſtinguiſh Knowledge into its kinds (as ſuppoſe *Intuitive* and *Demonſtrative*) but do not enter into its Firſt and General Idea. For which Conſideration I think the Perception of a things impoſſibility does better expreſs its Contrariety

Contrariety to Reaſon than the Repugnance it appears to have to ſome Principle or Concluſion of it, that being only (as I ſaid before) an inſtance and ſpecification (and but one ſingle one too) of its Impoſſibility.

19. So Now we are arrived to a Clear and Diſtinct Conception of things Above Reaſon and things Contrary to Reaſon. A thing is then above Reaſon when we do not Perceive or Comprehend how it can be. And then Contrary to Reaſon when we do Perceive that it Cannot be, or is Impoſſible. As to give a plain and ſenſible Inſtance of each of theſe. That the ſides of an *Hyperbola* ſhould be always approaching to each other and yet never meet, though continued to infinity; is a Propoſition of unqueſtion'd Certainty in Geometry, and yet ſuch as paſſes the Reaſon of a Man to Comprehend how it can be, and therefore may properly be ſaid to be one of thoſe things that are above Reaſon. But now that a Triangle ſhould have Parallel Sides, is not only above Reaſon, but directly Contrary to it.

For

For here the Underſtanding is not only at a loſs to Comprehend how it may be, but does poſitively and evidently perceive that it cannot be, it being utterly impoſſible that a Figure of Three Lines ſhould have its ſides Parallel to each other.

20. Now though by this Explanation of things above Reaſon and contrary to Reaſon the Difference between them is already obvious even to the eye, and ſtares a Man in the very Face, like things of great inequality whoſe Diſproportion appears at View, without Meaſuring them, yet for further Satisfaction's ſake, and to make the matter as plain as any thing in Nature to all but thoſe who either have not, or will not uſe their Underſtandings, let us a little Compare theſe Ideas together, thereby the better to illuſtrate their Difference.

21. It is moſt Evident that the Idea of things above Reaſon and the Idea of things contrary to Reaſon are two really diſtinct Ideas, and that One is Not the Other. This immediately appears from the very direct View of the Ideas themſelves.

For

For what can be More plain than that Not to Comprehend how a thing may be, and to Comprehend that it cannot be, are two different things? And what better way have we to know the Diſtinction of things, but only that the Idea of one is not the Idea of another? But then beſides, the Ideas of theſe things are not only Formally different from each other, but have alſo different Properties and Characters belonging to them, and ſuch too as are excluſive of each other, and which therefore do manifeſtly ſhew the Ideas to which they belong to be diſtinct. For, for a thing to be above Reaſon implies only a *Negation*, the Not Comprehending how a thing can be, but for a thing to be Contrary to Reaſon implies the *Poſition* of an Intellectual act, the Comprehending that it cannot be. Again, in things above Reaſon the Propoſition is ſuppoſed not to be underſtood, whereas in things Contrary to Reaſon, it is ſuppoſed to be well underſtood, and that to be falſe and impoſſible. Again, in things above Reaſon the Mind determines nothing concern-

ing

ing the *Object* propoſed, whether it be true or whether it be falſe, whether it be Poſſible, or whether it be Impoſſible. All that ſhe determines is concerning her own *Act*, that ſhe does not *Comprehend* how it can be. But whether it be or not, that ſhe does not affirm, but holds herſelf in a perfect Suſpence. But now in things Contrary to Reaſon the Mind is every whit as poſitive and deciſive, and does determine as boldly and freely as in thoſe things that are moſt according to it. Whereby it plainly appears that to be Contrary to Reaſon is ſomething more than to be above it, and that the Mind proceeds a great deal further in the former than in the latter, the Language of the Soul in things above Reaſon being only, *How can theſe things be*! But in things Contrary to Reaſon ſhe is Poſitive and Dogmatical, roundly pronouncing, *This cannot be*. So that unleſs there be no difference between a Negation and a Poſitive Act, between the Ignorance or Non-Perception of a thing, and the knowing it to be Falſe, between Suſpenſion and a peremptory Deter-

Determination, between a greater and a leſs, 'tis moſt undeniably evident that the Parts of this Diſtinction are not only really but widely different, and that to be above Reaſon is one thing, and to be contrary to Reaſon is another.

22. If it be pretended (as ſome perhaps may be likely to Object) that to be Contrary to Reaſon implies a Negation, as well as to be above Reaſon, becauſe it is there ſuppoſed to be Comprehended that the thing is Falſe and cannot be, and that therefore they agree in one of the Main inſtances of their Difference, to this the Anſwer is Clear and Full. I grant there is a Negation in one as well as the other, but then I diſtinguiſh of Negation. There is a Negation of the *Act*, and a Negation of the *Object*. Contrary to Reaſon does indeed imply a Negation of the Object, that is, it implies a Separation and diſ-union of certain Ideas, as inconſiſtent and incompatible one with another. But it does not imply a Negation of the Act, but the quite Contrary; becauſe the underſtanding is here ſuppoſed

ſuppoſed poſitively to comprehend the thing, and withal the Impoſſibility of it, which is not done in things Above Reaſon, wherein the Negation is that of the Act. So that this firſt and great difference between them ſtands firm and good.

23. And now having thus far juſtified the reality of this diſtinction of things Above Reaſon and Contrary to Reaſon both by the *Explanation* and *Collation* of the Parts of it, which thereby appear to conſiſt of Ideas as different as can well be conceiv'd, I might further proceed to do the ſame by producing ſome Inſtances of things confeſſedly Above Reaſon that are alſo notwithſtanding as confeſſedly True. For if any one thing that is Above Reaſon be yet found to be true, this plainly demonſtrates the thing in Queſtion (if there can be yet any Queſtion about it) moſt evidently ſhewing that what is Above Reaſon is not as ſuch Contrary to Reaſon, it being impoſſible that what is Contrary to Reaſon ſhould be true, whatever is Contrary to Reaſon being alſo as Contrary to Truth.

I might

I might alſo further alledge that to be Above Reaſon does equally abſtract from True and Falſe (which Contrary to Reaſon does not) and that not only becauſe, as I obſerved before, it determines nothing concerning its Object, but alſo becauſe 'tis a thing not of an Abſolute, but of a Relative Importance, as being an extrinſecal Denomination taken not from the Nature of the Object as it is in it ſelf, but only as it is to us, and in relation to our not only Finite, but very Limited Capacities. For to be Above Reaſon is not to be Above Reaſon in general or all Reaſon, ſo as to be abſolutely incomprehenſible, but only Human Reaſon. But then that which is Above the Reaſon of a Man may not be Above the Reaſon of an Angel (as indeed what is Above the Reaſon of one Man may not tranſcend that of another) and what is above the Reaſon of an Angel may yet be perfectly comprehended by God, the Supream and Soveraign Reaſon. So that to be Above Reaſon here is of a reſpective ſignification, ſuch as does not expreſs the quality of the Object

as

as it is in its own Nature, but only as it is in reference to ſuch a particular Faculty, whereas to be Contrary to Reaſon is not a Relative but an Abſolute thing, and whatever is Contrary to Reaſon, is Contrary to all Reaſon, and ſo conſequently to Truth. I ſay I might further inſiſt on theſe and ſome other Conſiderations, but being partly prevented here by Mr. *Boyle* (whoſe Account I would have uſed to ſupply the defects of Mine, as Mine is intended to ſupply ſome of his) and having ſo abundantly clear'd the difference of theſe things already, I ſhall not ſo far diſtruſt either the Strength of the Argument, or that of my Reader's Underſtanding, as to proſecute this Matter any further than only to ſhape an Anſwer out of what has been laid down, to an Objection which I meet with in a Modern Writer againſt *Monſieur Jurieu*, and which, to do it the utmoſt Juſtice, I will ſet down in his own words.

24. *I have Conſider'd* (ſays he) *the Diſtinction which they uſe between being Contrary to Reaſon, and being above Reaſon. 'Tis agreed that 'tis not*

Avis Sur le Tableau du Socinianiſme. Traité 1. pag. 14.

poſſible to believe what is Contrary to Reaſon. But 'tis ſaid that we can well believe what is above Reaſon. This Diſtinction ſeems to me of no uſe, or elſe I do not comprehend it. For if by being above Reaſon it be meant that we do not comprehend a Truth in its whole Extent, though what we conceive of it be clear and certain, I own that in this ſenſe one ought to believe what is above Reaſon. But if by being above Reaſon be meant a Doctrine, wherein we ſee nothing Clear, a Doctrine which our Reaſon loſes the ſight of on all its ſides, I mean that all the Propoſitions which may be extracted from it appear incomprehenſible, ſuch a one as this for example, that the three Divine Perſons make but one God, &c. It ſeems that to be above Reaſon in this ſenſe, is the ſame as to be intirely inacceſſible to Reaſon, which differs nothing, but in words, from being Contrary to Reaſon.

25. I ſuppoſe whoever has duely conſider'd and well comprehended the Tenour of the foregoing Diſcourſe, can neither be inſenſible of the Deficiency of this Allegation, nor be long at a loſs what Anſwer

to return to it. But to ſpare my Reader this Trouble, My Reply is, that this Author's Argument proceeds upon a wrong Suppoſition. He ſuppoſes here that to be *Above Reaſon* muſt be either the Not Comprehending a thing in its whole Latitude and extent, or the Comprehending Nothing at all of it. Whereas I have ſhewn before that 'tis neither of them; That we do not mean by Above Reaſon what is all over unintelligible, even as to the very *Meaning* of the Propoſition, nor what is not to be Comprehended in its utmoſt extent, but only what is incomprehenſible to us as to the Truth of the thing, or the Manner of it. 'Tis true indeed if the Propoſition were perfectly unintelligible, ſo that (as he ſays) *we could ſee nothing clear in it*, even as to the very Senſe and Meaning of it, we could no more believe it than what is Contrary to Reaſon, though even then it would not (as this Author confuſely enough pretends) be the ſame with it, becauſe what is Contrary to Reaſon is ſuppoſed to be well underſtood. But 'tis much otherwiſe

if it be incomprehenſible only as to the Truth or Manner of the thing. This as I ſhall ſhew hereafter may very well be Beleiv'd, though what is Contrary to Reaſon cannot, and what is utterly unintelligible cannot. And I have ſufficiently ſhewn already that what is *thus* only *inacceſſible* to Reaſon differs, a little more than in words, from being contrary to it.

26. And now if Humane Nature were not a very unaccountable thing, I ſhould ſtand greatly amazed at either the Natural or wilful Blindneſs of thoſe who are for confounding things ſo vaſtly different as the parts of this Diſtinction, of things above Reaſon and contrary to it, moſt apparently are. There are indeed ſome things which we are ordinarily taught to diſtinguiſh, and yet when ſtrictly examin'd and compared, will be found to have no real ground of Diſtinction in them. And 'tis every whit as great (and almoſt as Common) a Fault to diſtinguiſh things that do not differ, as to confound thoſe that do. And there are alſo

alſo other things of ſuch near Reſemblance and Cognation to each other that there needs a great deal of Art, Subtlety and nice Inſpection to diſcern their Difference. So Fine and Minute and almoſt imperceptible are the Lines that terminate their Natures, and divide them from one another. But the Ideas of theſe things are as different as thoſe of a Man and a Tree, a Triangle and a Square, ſo that a Man muſt wink hard not to perceive it, or be very inſincere not to acknowledge it. And I cannot imagine why thoſe eſpecially who are known to ſerve themſelves upon occaſion of Diſtinctions which have no other Foundation than the mere Will and Pleaſure (unleſs you will ſay Intereſt) of thoſe that uſe them, ſhould yet reject ſuch a Solid and well-grounded, as well as well Authorized, one as this, but only becauſe it is not for their turn, and, if admitted, would like a Bomb thrown into their Garriſon, blow up and lay waſt their Main Strength, and force them to deſert and give

up a Cauſe which they are (now eſpecially) moſt Zealouſly Fond of, and ſeem reſolv'd even *againſt Reaſon* to Maintain.

27. For I muſt further remarque (and 'tis an Obſervation not lightly to be paſs'd over) that if this One Diſtinction of things above Reaſon, and things contrary to Reaſon be once admitted, (or ſhewn to be real, Solid and well-grounded, the main part of the *Socinian* Controverſie is immediately, or at leaſt in the very next Conſequence, at an end. For the Reaſon why they will not believe things above Reaſon is becauſe (as they pretend) Above Reaſon differs nothing in reality from Contrary to Reaſon, and ſo thoſe things that are above Reaſon are alſo as much contrary to it as above it, and what is Contrary to Reaſon is on both ſides acknowledg'd impoſſible to be believ'd. Well, but then if it be made appear (as I think by this time is ſufficiently done) that theſe two are quite different things, and that to be above Reaſon is not the ſame as to be contrary to it,

then

then even by their own Confeſſion there can be no pretence why what is above Reaſon may not be Believ'd. Which I take to be the true inducement that makes theſe Men ſtand out ſo fiercely and obſtinately againſt this Diſtinction (for they are aware what miſchief it will do 'em) as it is alſo the reaſon why I have beſtow'd ſo much care and pains to clear and juſtifie it.

28. And thus having given an Account of theſe great and Fundamental things, what Reaſon is, what Faith is, and what it is to be Above, and what Contrary to Reaſon, we have now prepared the way to the more full and direct Conſideration of the Belief of things above Reaſon, the true ſtate of which Queſtion by what has been hitherto diſcours'd appears to be this, Whether we may not Aſſent upon the Authority of Divine Revelation to ſuch things as our Underſtanding or Reaſon cannot perceive or Comprehend as to the Truth or Manner of them. Or, whether our not being able thus to Comprehend them, be a

ſufficient Reaſon why we ſhould not believe them. For the Reſolution of which we have already laid the Grounds, and ſhall now proceed more directly to build upon them in the following Chapter.

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

That Human Reaſon is not the Meaſure of Truth.

1. WE have gain'd a moſt wonderful Point in the foregoing Chapter, by proving the Diſtinction between things Above and things Contrary to Reaſon, and ſuch as of it ſelf alone is ſufficient Not only immediately to decide, but even forever to Silence the Controverſie between us and our *Socinian* Adverſaries concerning the Belief of things above Reaſon. For the only Objection that is or can poſſibly be pretended againſt the Belief of things above Reaſon being the ſuppoſed Contrariety of the ſame things to Reaſon, if it be ſhewn that to be above Reaſon involves no ſuch Contrariety, then the Objection againſt the belief of ſuch things is fairly and wholly removed,

ed, and consequently there remains no Reason why they may not be Believ'd. So that I cannot but look upon the Substance of my Work as most effectually done already, and those of our Adversaries that have any reasonable Measure of Penetration and Sincerity must needs be sensible of it. And I dare appeal even to their own Consciences whether they are not. However considering the importunity of those I have to deal with, as well as the weight of the Cause it self, I shall endeavour the further establishment of it upon some other Considerations, whereby I shall also give further Confirmation, and so repay what I am endebted to the Point contended for in the preceding Chapter, since we may as well argue backwards from the Believableness of things above Reason to their not Contrariety, as forwards from their not Contrariety to their Believableness, the Consequence being full as good, thus, *Above Reason Believable, therefore not Contrary*, as thus, *Above Reason not Contrary, therefore Believable*. Now in order to the fuller

fuller Conviction and demonſtration of the Believableneſs of things above Reaſon I ſet out upon this Ground, that *Humane Reaſon is not the Meaſure of Truth.*

2. 'Tis agreed among the Maſters of Reaſon that as all Proof ought to be only of ſuch things as need it, ſo there are Propoſitions ſo Clear and Evident of themſelves that they have no need of being demonſtrated, and that there are ſome again that are not capable of Demonſtration, the Fulneſs and immediateneſs of their Evidence rendring them ſtrictly indemonſtrable. And it has been charged by one of the moſt Conſiderable of them as a Fault in the Method of the *Geometricians* that they ſet themſelves to prove things that have no need of Proof, whereof he gives an Inſtance in *Euclid*, who goes formally to work to prove that two ſides of a Triangle taken together are greater than one, although this be moſt Evident even from the Notion only of a Right Line, which is the ſhorteſt that can poſſibly be between two Points, and the Natural Meaſure of Diſtance from

L' Art de Penſer. P. 432.

from one Point to another, which it could not be if it were not alſo the ſhorteſt of all Lines that can be drawn from Point to Point.

3. Now though I cannot ſay that the Propoſition of this Chapter is ſo Evident of it ſelf as not to be capable of Demonſtration, yet I muſt Confeſs I cannot but think it of the Number of thoſe that do not need any, that is I mean, to thoſe who will but take the Pains to conſider it with Attention, and are withal ſo ſincere as to ſay ingenuouſly what they inwardly think. For to unattentive or Captious Perſons nothing is plain (ſince there is Nothing but what ſome will contradict, and there are thoſe who profeſs to doubt of every thing) and even the Sun it ſelf can't make a Man ſee, if either he want eyes, or will ſhut 'em. I cannot therefore ſay that to ſuch men either this or any other Propoſition is plain, but I would venture to be tried by any competent and indifferent Conſiderer whether this be not indeed a very plain and certain Propoſition, as plain as moſt of thoſe which paſs for Principles

ciples and Maximes in Diſcourſe, that *Human Reaſon is not the Meaſure of Truth.* And accordingly I ſhould juſtly fear incurring the ſame Cenſure that is charged upon the *Geometricians*, of going to prove what is evident, were there not ſomething peculiar in the preſent Caſe that makes it very different from theirs. For they dealing in Matters of an Abſtract and indifferent Nature, and ſuch wherein the Luſts and Paſſions of men are altogether unintereſſed, have no real need to prove evident things, becauſe for that very reaſon their Evidence is never Conteſted; whereas the Point I have now in hand being of a Moral Concernment and ſuch as incounters the Partialities and falſe Biaſſes of Humane Nature, particularly that great and governing one of *Self-Love*, though it ſhould be of equal evidence with ſome of their Maxims, will yet not be equally ſecure from Oppoſition, and paſs alike unconteſted. And ſo there may be need of proving it, if not to do any neceſſary Service to the Propoſition it ſelf, yet to ſatisfie the impor-

importunity of the Men I argue with. Which indeed is the preſent Caſe, ſince (as was intimated in the Beginning) the Sentiment of theſe Men concerning the disbelief of things above Reaſon reſolves at laſt into this Principle, that Human Reaſon is the Meaſure of Truth. Which therefore both for their Satisfaction and Refutation muſt be ſhewn to be Falſe.

4. Now when I ſay that Human Reaſon is not the Meaſure of Truth, my meaning is, that it is not that Common Standard whereby Truth in the General is to be Meaſured, ſo that of every thing it may be ſafely Concluded that it is either true or not true according as it accords with this Meaſure, as 'tis comprehenſible or not Comprehenſible by Human Reaſon. 'Tis true indeed there is a certain Senſe in which Human Reaſon ſometimes is, and may be truely ſaid to be the Meaſure of Truth, in as much as whatever the Underſtanding does clearly and diſtinctly Perceive may be concluded as moſt certainly true, it being impoſſible that a thing ſhould be otherwiſe

wiſe than as we clearly perceive it to be, without ſuppoſing our Perceptive Faculties to be in themſelves Naturally Falſe, and without ſuppoſing it alſo neceſſary that we ſhould fall into Errour even in the right uſe of theſe Faculties (it being impoſſible to conceive a More right uſe of them than to Aſſent only to what we clearly Perceive) which are not only in themſelves manifeſt Abſurdities, but ſuch alſo as would neceſſarily infer the Authour of our Natures to be alſo the Authour of our Errours and Deceptions. It muſt therefore be admitted by all what the Philoſophers of the *Carteſian* way ſo earneſtly ſtand and Contend for, that Clearneſs of Perception is the great Rule and *Criterion* of Truth, ſo far that whatever we do clearly and diſtinctly perceive to be true is really in it ſelf True. But then this is only to be a Partial and inadequate Rule, and in ſome certain limited reſpect only, not abſolutely and in general. For though I grant that whatever we clearly perceive is true, yet I deny that it follows likewiſe Backwards, that what-

whatever is true we do alſo clearly Perceive, and ſo conſequently that whatever we do not clearly Perceive is therefore not True. By which it is plain that this *Carteſian* Maxim muſt be very much abuſed to prove that Human Reaſon is the Common and General Meaſure of Truth, and I dare ſay the Great Authors of it never intended it to that purpoſe.

5. Reaſon or Underſtanding in general may be ſafely ſaid, and muſt neceſſarily be allow'd to be the Meaſure of Truth. For Truth in general carries a neceſſary Relation to underſtanding in general, as fully adequate and commenſurate to it. So that all Truth is ſimply and abſolutely intelligible, the greateſt and ſublimeſt Truths as much as the leaſt and meaneſt, thoſe which the Angels ſtudy and deſire to look into, as much as thoſe which employ the narrow Thoughts of the pooreſt Ruſtic. The Former are in themſelves as intelligible as the latter, and if not actually ſo well underſtood 'tis not becauſe of any incapacity in the Objects, but by reaſon of the Diſproportion of the Faculties

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that are Converſant about them. But this diſproportion muſt not be Univerſal, nor extend throughout the whole Order of Being. For what is intelligible muſt be ſo to ſome Underſtanding (ſince what no Underſtanding can Comprehend is the ſame as not to be intelligible) and conſequently there muſt be an Underſtanding that Comprehends all that is truly intelligible, that is, all Truth. And accordingly it may be truly ſaid of this All-Comprehenſive Underſtanding, that it is the Meaſure of Truth, ſo that whatever this perfect Underſtanding does not underſtand is not intelligible, and if not intelligible, then alſo not True. Beſides that it might be further Conſider'd (were this a proper place for ſo Abſtract and Metaphyſical a Speculation) that Truth it Self, as to the real Nature and Eſſence of it, is one and the ſame with the Divine Ideas as they are related to one another, and does therefore exiſt Originally and intirely in the Mind of God, who is Subſtantial Truth, and accordingly does Comprehend all Truth;

and ſo conſequently is the Meaſure of it. And becauſe this All-comprehenſive Underſtanding is contain'd within the Extent of Reaſon or Underſtanding in General, therefore it may be truly ſaid alſo of Reaſon or Underſtanding in General that it is the Meaſure of Truth, it being moſt certain that what is above all Reaſon, or what no Reaſon whatſoever can Comprehend is as much above Truth too, and cannot poſſibly be true.

6. But though it be thus neceſſary to allow this of Reaſon in General, the ſame cannot be allow'd of Human Reaſon. For whatever is the Meaſure of Truth muſt be fully adequate and Commenſurate to Truth. That's Certain. And therefore if Human Reaſon be the Meaſure of Truth it muſt have the ſame compaſs and extent with Truth, and poſſeſs it whole and intire, if not Eſſentially and Subſtantially as God does, yet at leaſt Noetically and by way of Theory, ſo as to be able thoroughly to Perceive and Comprehend all Truth. But now that this Qualification cannot

not possibly agree to Human Reason (though it be somewhat unreasonable that I should be put to prove such a Proposition as this) I hope fully to demonstrate upon a Double Consideration, one taken from the Nature of Human Reason, and the other from the Nature of Truth.

7. And first to begin with Truth. This, as the Most thinking and Metaphysical Persons Conceive of it, is supposed to consist in the Relations of equality or inequality, or Agreement or Disagreement. Now we are to Consider that these Relations may be of Three Sorts, either such as are between Created Beings, or such as are between Intelligible Ideas, or such as are between Created Beings and their Ideas. And we are also to Consider that there are two General Sorts of Truths extremely different one from another, and therefore carefully to be distinguish'd. Those that regard only the Abstract Natures of things, and their immutable Essences, independently on their actual Existence. And others a-

gain that do regard things that do actually Exist. The former of these Constitute that Order of Truths which we call *Necessary*, the latter that which we call *Contingent*. And this double order of Truths results from that threefold Relation before-mention'd. From the first and third Relations arise Contingent Truths, which are nothing else but the Relations of agreement or disagreement that are either between Created Beings themselves, or between Created Beings and their Ideas. And these I call Contingent Truths in opposition to those that are Necessary and Eternal, partly because these Relations could not begin to exist before those Beings were produced (it being impossible that there should be Relations between things that are not) and partly because these Relations might not have existed, because those Beings might not have been produced. And as Contingent Truths arise from the first and third, so from the second and middle Relations result those Truths which are Necessary, Eternal, and Immutable, and

and which I understand to be nothing else but the Relations of Agreement or Disagreement that are between Ideas.

8. I go here upon the common and allow'd Distinction between Necessary and Contingent Truths, and upon the as much allow'd Supposition that there is such an Order of Truths as are Necessary and Eternal, which therefore I take for granted as a Principle, not to decline the trouble of proving it, but because it is a Confess'd as well as Evident thing, and I care not for proving any more evident things than I needs must. And that these Necessary and Eternal Truths are in this precisely distinguish'd from those that are Contingent, *that they are the Relations that are between Ideas*, I think is plain from the very Notion and Nature of them, because they are supposed to be such Truths as regard the Abstract Natures and Essences of things as they are in Idea, and not as they have an actual Existence *in rerum Naturâ*, since then they would not be necessary, but Contingent Truths,

gain that do regard things that do actually Exiſt. The former of theſe Conſtitute that Order of Truths which we call *Neceſſary*, the latter that which we call *Contingent*. And this double order of Truths reſults from that threefold Relation before-mention'd. From the firſt and third Relations ariſe Contingent Truths, which are nothing elſe but the Relations of agreement or diſagreement that are either between Created Beings themſelves, or between Created Beings and their Ideas. And theſe I call Contingent Truths in oppoſition to thoſe that are Neceſſary and Eternal, partly becauſe theſe Relations could not begin to exiſt before thoſe Beings were produced (it being impoſſible that there ſhould be Relations between things that are not) and partly becauſe theſe Relations might not have exiſted, becauſe thoſe Beings might not have been produced. And as Contingent Truths ariſe from the firſt and third, ſo from the ſecond and middle Relations reſult thoſe Truths which are Neceſſary, Eternal, and Immutable, and

and which I understand to be nothing else but the Relations of Agreement or Disagreement that are between Ideas.

8. I go here upon the common and allow'd Distinction between Necessary and Contingent Truths, and upon the as much allow'd Supposition that there is such an Order of Truths as are Necessary and Eternal, which therefore I take for granted as a Principle, not to decline the trouble of proving it, but because it is a Confess'd as well as Evident thing, and I care not for proving any more evident things than I needs must. And that these Necessary and Eternal Truths are in this precisely distinguish'd from those that are Contingent, *that they are the Relations that are between Ideas*, I think is plain from the very Notion and Nature of them, because they are supposed to be such Truths as regard the Abstract Natures and Essences of things as they are in Idea, and not as they have an actual Existence *in rerum Naturâ*, since then they would not be necessary, but Contingent Truths,

which would be contrary to the Suppoſition. And Becauſe theſe Neceſſary Truths are the moſt conſiderable and principal ſort of Truths, as being the Ground and Foundation of all Science, and the true and proper Objects of our Theory and Contemplation, and becauſe for the ſame Reaſon whenever we ſpeak of Truth Abſolutely and in General we are preſumed to mean neceſſary and immutable Truth, hence it is that Truth is commonly ſaid by Metaphyſical Writers to conſiſt in the Relations that are between Ideas, though indeed this be ſtrictly true only of *Neceſſary* Truth. But it is ſufficient to the preſent purpoſe that it is true of this. And ſo much I ſuppoſe will readily be granted me at leaſt, that the general Nature and Reaſon of Neceſſary and Eternal Truths conſiſts in the Relations that are between Ideas.

9. I further add that theſe Ideas muſt be the ſame with the *Divine* Ideas. 'Tis true indeed that exactly ſpeaking all Ideas are Divine Ideas, even thoſe which we uſe to call our own, it being moſt Certain

tain (as might eaſily and with the greateſt Evidence be ſhewn) that the immediate Objects of our Underſtandings are no other than the Ideas of the Divine Intellect, in which we ſee and contemplate all things. But not to enter into this ſublime Speculation at preſent, it will be ſufficient to conſider that unleſs the Ideas whoſe Relations Conſtitute thoſe Truths which are Neceſſary and Eternal be the Divine Ideas, it will be impoſſible that Neceſſary and Eternal Truths ſhould be what we ſuppoſe they are, that is Neceſſary and Eternal. For Neceſſary and Eternal Truths muſt be Neceſſary and Eternal Relations, and it being impoſſible that Relations ſhould be more Neceſſary or Eternal than the Subjects from which they reſult, unleſs theſe Ideas the Subjects of theſe Relations be Neceſſary and Eternal, how can their Relations be ſo? 'Tis plain therefore that theſe Ideas muſt be Neceſſary and Eternal. But now I pray what Ideas are ſo but the *Divine*? What is there in the whole Compaſs of Being that is Neceſſary,

Eternal and Immutable but God and his Divine Perfections? As therefore we ſay that theſe Neceſſary and Eternal Truths are Relations between *Ideas*, and not ſuch as are between either Created Entities themſelves, or between them and their Ideas, becauſe then they would be of the Order of Contingent, not of Neceſſary Truths, For the ſame reaſon we muſt ſay that they are the Relations that are between the *Divine Ideas*, thoſe only being ſufficiently ſteddy and Permanent Subjects to ſuſtain ſuch Stable and Immutable Relations. And indeed were it not for thoſe Repreſentative Perfections of the Divine Nature which we call *Ideas*, there would be no Neceſſary and Eternal Eſſences to ſupport theſe Neceſſary and Eternal Relations, and then there could be no ſuch Relations, and if no ſuch Relations, then there could be no Neceſſary Truths, and if no Neceſſary Truths then no Science. Which by the way would moſt Convincingly prove to any Capable and Attentive Underſtanding the abſolute Neceſſity and Certainty

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of a God, as the moſt inmoſt Ground and *Central* Support of the whole Intellectual World.

10. Well then it can no longer be doubted but that theſe Neceſſary and Eternal Truths are the Relations that are between the *Divine Ideas*. But now as theſe Ideas are Infinite as being the Eſſential Perfections of God, and really identify'd with his Divine Nature and Subſtance, ſo it muſt neceſſarily follow that the Relations that reſult from them, and ſubſiſt between them muſt alſo be Infinite. And then ſince theſe Truths do eſſentially Conſiſt in, and in their Reaſon and Formality are no other than theſe Ideal Relations, it no leſs evidently follows that Truth alſo muſt be Infinite too.

11. Which alſo will be neceſſary to Conclude upon another Account. For I conſider again that ſince Relations do not in reality differ as diſtinct Entities from their Subjects and Terms (as the Relations of two Circles ſuppoſed to be equal to each other do not really differ from the Circles themſelves ſo related) theſe

Ideal

Ideal Relations muſt in the reality of the thing be one and the ſame with the Divine Ideas themſelves, and conſequently with the Divine Nature with which theſe Ideas are identified. And accordingly Truth which is the ſame with theſe Ideal Relations muſt alſo as to the real Eſſence and Subſtance of it be one and the ſame with the Divine Nature.

12. And that indeed it is ſo may be further, and ſomewhat more directly, demonſtrated thus. That God is the Cauſe of whatever is beſides himſelf, or, that whatever is, is either God or the Effect of God is a clear and acknowledg'd Principle. Neceſſary Truth then is either God or the Effect of God. But it is not the Effect of God, and therefore it can be no other than God himſelf. Now that it is not the Effect of God, the many groſs Abſurdities which that ſuppoſition draws after it I think will oblige him that Conſiders them to acknowledge. For Firſt, if Neceſſary Truth be the effect of God either it would not be neceſſary, which is againſt the

the Suppoſition; or if it be, then as being a neceſſary Effect it muſt have a neceſſary Cauſe, that is a Cauſe neceſſarily determin'd to act, and ſo God would be a *neceſſary* Agent, even *ad extra*. He would alſo be an *unintelligent* Agent. The Conſequence is not to be avoided. For if Truth be the effect of God then antecedently to the effecting of it, there was no Truth, and conſequently no Knowledge, becauſe there could be nothing known; and ſo God in the production of Truth (if indeed he did produce it) muſt be ſuppoſed to act altogether in the dark, and without any Intelligence. Again, if Truth be the Effect of God, then the Perfection of the Divine Underſtanding muſt be ſuppoſed to depend upon ſomething that is not God, nay upon ſomething created by God, whereas God is the true perfective Object of all his Creatures, and is himſelf completely Happy in the ſole Contemplation of himſelf. 'Twill follow again that God has conſtituted an Order of Realities which he has not Power to aboliſh; that he has made ſome things which he cannot

not unmake again. And laſtly to add no more, If Truth be the Effect of God then it cannot be God, (becauſe God cannot produce what is Himſelf) and if it be not God, then by the Suppoſition there will be ſomething Neceſſary, Immutable, Eternal and Independent, *&c.* that is not God. Which laſt Conſequence as it contradicts the Common and Natural Sentiment of Mankind, ſo it ſtruck ſo hard againſt a certain very Thoughtful and Metaphyſical Head, that he could not forbear urging this as One Argument againſt the very Being of Neceſſary Truth; becauſe then (as he pretends) there would be ſomething Neceſſary beſides God, not conſidering that this Neceſſary Truth is really one and the ſame with the Divine Subſtance. Which one Conſideration puts by the whole force of his Argument againſt the *Being* of Neceſſary Truth, though however it be ſufficiently concluſive of the Point we now contend for, that this Truth is not the *Effect* of God. For if it were then his Allegation would take place; that is, there would indeed

Cogit. Rational. de Deo, p. 256.

deed be ſomething Neceſſary beſides God, which though it does not follow from the Suppoſition of the *Being* of Neceſſary Truth, is yet plainly inſeparable from the other Suppoſition, that of its being the Effect of God. For then the very next Conſequence is, that there would be ſomething Neceſſary beſides God, which no Religious, nor indeed Rational Ear can bear. 'Tis plain therefore that Truth is not the Effect of God; and ſince it is not, it remains by vertue of the premiſed Disjunction that it can be no other than the very Subſtance and Eſſence of the Deity.

13. And to this purpoſe I further conſider, That the whole Perfection of the Mind does conſiſt in its union with God, who is her only true Good. This ſeems to me a Propoſition of a very ſhining Evidence. For the good of the Mind muſt of neceſſity be ſomething *Spiritual*, otherwiſe it would be of a Nature inferiour to herſelf, and ſo not capable of being her Perfection. But neither is that enough. Whatever is the good of the Mind muſt not be

be only of a like Nature with the Mind, that is, of a Spiritual, but of a *ſuperiour* Nature too. It muſt be ſomething above the Mind that can be its Perfection, and that can act upon it, and inlighten it, and affect it with pleaſing Senſations, otherwiſe how can it be able to add any thing to its better Being or Perfection? And in order to all this it muſt alſo be intimately preſent to it, and united with it, otherwiſe how can it ſo act upon it? But now God is the only Spiritual Being whom we can poſſibly conceive thus qualified to be the good or perfective Object of our Minds. Whence it follows that he only is ſo, and that we cannot become either more Perfect or more Happy in any Kind or Degree but by our Union with, and Poſſeſſion of God. And hence it further follows, that Truth could not be any Perfection of our Underſtandings if it were not the ſame with the Divine Eſſence (ſince that is our only perfective and beatifying Object) and that therefore ſince it really is perfective of our Underſtandings, and that in the very higheſt meaſure (the

(the Underſtanding being then moſt Perfect when it has the cleareſt and the largeſt view of Truth) it can be no other than the very Eſſence of that Infinite Mind who is the only true Good and Objective Perfection of all Spirits.

14. 'Tis true indeed *Des Cartes* makes all Truth, even that which is Eternal to have been poſitively inſtituted and eſtabliſh'd by God, to depend upon him as the *Summus Legiſlator*, to be the effect of his Will and Pleaſure, and by Conſequence to be Abſolutely and Originally Arbitrary and Contingent. So that according to him 2 and 2 might not have been 4, or 3 Angles of a Triangle might not have been equal to 2 Right ones if God had pleas'd ſo to Order it. But this Notion of this Great Man does ſo rudely Shock the Natural Senſe of Mankind that it cannot find Admiſſion even where the reſt of his Philoſophy does, but is generally exploded notwithſtanding the eminency of its Author, and that even by one of his greateſt Admirers, and (as I think) by far the Moſt Conſiderable of his Diſciples. *Mr. Malebranche.*

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And truly I think this Opinion is treated no worſe than it deſerves, ſince beſides the Abſurdities already Mention'd, it ſhakes the Foundations of Science, yea and of Morality too, by ſuppoſing the Natures not only of Metaphyſical and Mathematical Truth, but even of Moral Good and Evil to be of a Poſitive and Arbitrary, and Conſequently of a Contingent Ordination. It is therefore deſervedly as well as generally rejected, but then let thoſe that reject it have a Care that they fall not into a worſe Abſurdity. As they would not ſuppoſe Truth to be of a Poſitive and Alterable Nature and that the Relations of Ideas might have been otherwiſe than they are, ſo let them have a Care how they make any thing Neceſſary and Immutable that is Not God. Let them be Conſiſtent with themſelves, and as they juſtly reject the Opinion that makes Truth the Effect of God's Free and Arbitrarious Conſtitution, and conſequently of a Mutable and Variable Nature, ſo let them own and Confeſs (as they are Obliged to do) that

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it is no other than God himſelf. For there is no other way of avoiding *Des Cartes*'s Abſurdity. For if Truth be not God then 'tis the Effect of God, and if the Effect of God then ſince the Conſtitutions of God are Free and Arbitrary, the Natures and Relations of things might have been quite otherwiſe than they are, the whole Science of Geometry might be tranſpoſed, a Circle might have the Properties of a Square, and a Square the Properties of a Circle, 2 and 2 might not have been 4, or what elſe you will inſtance in. And ſo in Morality too (which is of far worſe Conſequence) there might have been the like tranſpoſition, what is Vertue might have been Vice, and what is Vice might have been Vertue. Theſe are the Natural Conſequences of Truth's being the Effect of Divine Conſtitution, and they are intolerable ones too, and therefore the Principle from which they flow is by the general Current of Writers well denied. But then unleſs they proceed, and acknowledge Truth to be one with the Divine Eſſence they cannot help

relapſing into the ſame or worſe Abſurdities. For whoever ſays that Truth is not God muſt ſay that it is the Effect of God, and whoever ſays that, muſt either ſay that 'tis Arbitrary and Contingent, or if he ſays it is Neceſſary and Immutable, he muſt allow of ſomething Neceſſary and Immutable that is not God. But now it being moſt Evident that there is nothing Neceſſary that is not God, if Truth be not God then 'tis plain that it cannot be Neceſſary (which preſently runs us into the *Carteſian* Abſurdity of the Arbitrary Poſition of Truth) or if it be Neceſſary then 'tis as plain that it muſt be God. The ſhort is, Truth is either God or the Effect of God. If it be not God, then 'tis the Effect of God as *Des Cartes* ſays. But if not the Effect of God (as the Conſequent Abſurdities from that Principle demonſtrate, and as is generally granted) then 'tis God himſelf as we ſay. It muſt be one or the other, there is no Medium. To ſay that Truth is God, or to ſay that 'tis the Effect of God are each of them Conſiſtent Propoſitions, though

though from the groſs Abſurdities of the Latter the Former only appears to be the right, but to deny that 'tis the effect of God and yet not to ſay that it is God, that is to affirm that 'tis neither the Effect of God nor yet God, is all over unmaintainable and inconſiſtent. If it be not the Effect of God (as is both generally and juſtly acknowledg'd) then it muſt of Neceſſity be God, ſince whatever is, is either God or the Effect of God.

15. And indeed if Truth be not God how comes it to be Cloath'd with the Glorious Enſigns of his Majeſty, to wear the Characters of his Divinity, and to have ſo many of his peculiar and incommunicable Attributes? How comes it to be Neceſſary, Immutable, Eternal, Self-exiſtent, Increated, Immenſe, Omni-preſent and Independent, and that not only upon the Conceptions of any Minds whether Human or Angelical, but even all things whatſoever, which might never have been made, or might now be annihilated without any Prejudice to the being of Truth, which does not

reſpect the natural and actual Exiſtencies but only the Abſtract Eſſences of things. For were there no ſuch thing as any real Circle or Triangle in Nature it would ſtill be never the leſs true that their Abſtract Eſſences would be determinate and invariable, and that ſuch and ſuch diſtinct Properties would belong to them. Which by the way plainly Convinces that Truth is none of the Effects, Works, or Creatures of God, ſince it did exiſt before them, does not now depend on them, and would remain the ſelf-ſame Immutable thing without them. But then I demand whence has it this Self-ſubſiſtence and Independency of Being? Whence again has it its fix'd and unalterable Nature, ſuch as we can neither add any thing to, nor diminiſh ought from? How is it that it is Preſent in all Places, and to all Minds, ſo as to be Contemplated by them all at the ſame time, and after the ſame Manner? How comes it to paſs that we cannot ſo much as *diſ-imagine* it, or by way of Fiction and Suppoſition remove it out of Being; but

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it ſtill returns upon us with a ſtrong and invincible *Spring*, ſince even the very Suppoſition that there is no Truth carries a Formal Propoſition in it whoſe Ideas have a certain Habitude to each other, and ſo Contradicts it ſelf. Beſides how comes it to be a Perfection of the Divine Underſtanding? Is any thing a Perfection to God but himſelf? How comes it alſo to be the Rule and Meaſure of his Will, which can be determin'd by nothing but what is juſt Reaſonable and True? Can any thing be a Rule to God that is not himſelf? Does he Conſult or Follow any thing but what is One with his own Divine Nature and Eſſence? And yet God conſults and follows Truth, and cannot act but according to its Immutable Laws and Meaſures. It is not therefore really diſtinguiſh'd from him, but Coeternal and Conſubſtantial with him, and ſo in Conſulting Truth he Conſults his own Eſſence *, even the Divine Λόγος, the Eternal and Increated

* *Veritas immutabilis eſt, veritas incommutabilis eſt, veritas illud verbum eſt de quo dicitur* in principio erat verbum, & verbum erat apud Deum & Deus erat verbum. *S. Auſtin in Pſal.* 123.

Wiſdom, the true intelligible Light, in whom are all the Ideas and Eſſences of things, the Fulneſs of Being and Truth, who in the Beginning was with God, and was God, who is Eternally Contemplated by him with Infinite Joy and Complacency, and who ſaid of himſelf Incarnate, *I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.* I would fain know how all theſe incommunicable Attributes of God ſhould agree to Truth if it be any thing leſs than a Divine Nature. Particularly I demand, whence has it that unſhakeable Firmneſs and Stability, that invincible Permanency and Stedfaſtneſs, that Neceſſity of Exiſtence, that utter repugnance to Not Being, but only becauſe it is really Coeſſential and Conſubſtantial with him whoſe Name is *Jehovah*, and who is Being it ſelf, to whom it is Eſſential to Exiſt, or rather, whoſe very Eſſence is Exiſtence.

16. But now from this Coeſſentiality and Conſubſtantiality of Truth with the Divine Nature (a Noble and Sublime Theory, but which I

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do but lightly touch over, having not room here to purſue it at large) it evidently and neceſſarily follows again that Truth is *Infinite*. There cannot be a more immediate, nor a more neceſſary, nor a more inſeparable Connexion between any two things than between this Conſequence and that Principle. And indeed if Truth were not Infinite how can the Knowledge of God be ſo? Not ſure as Concretely and Objectively Conſider'd, for that manifeſtly implies the Infinity of its Object. And what is the Object of the Divine, or of any other Underſtanding, but Truth? And ſhould Knowledge here be taken for the Power or Faculty of Knowing, to what purpoſe is an Infinite Power of Knowing unleſs there be an Infinite to be Known? And would not ſuch a Power be uneaſie and afflictive, as well as uſeleſs, to him that had it, unleſs the Object be ſuppoſed to carry a due Proportion to it: For if it be ſo uneaſie a Reflexion to ſome of us to have ſuch ſhort and narrow Faculties when the Compaſs of Truth has ſo large

and ſpatious an extent, to be able to know ſo little when there is ſo much to be known, how much more troubleſom and painful would it be to the Supreme Intelligence to have an Infinite Underſtanding when all that is intelligible is but Finite? Would not that Infinity of his Capacity ſerve to vex and diſquiet him more than the Narrowneſs of ours does us, the difference being as much as between having a great Stomach and but little Meat, and a little Stomach when there is a great deal of Meat, whereof which is the greateſt Puniſhment is Obvious to imagine. And we may judge of this in ſome meaſure by our ſelves. We have in us a Capacity boundleſs and unlimited. For tho' our Underſtandings be Finite, our Wills know no Meaſure, and are in a manner Infinite. As God has made us capable of enjoying an Infinite Good, ſo Nothing leſs than that can ſatisfie our Deſires. For we deſire Good as Good, and conſequently all poſſible Good. Now we find this to be a great Pain to us at preſent to deſire an Infinite Good when all that we can enjoy here

here is Finite. The greateſt part of the Uneaſineſs, the Melancholy, the Diſconſolateneſs, the Aridity that accompanies Human Life will be found, if traced to the Original, to proceed from hence, *viz.* from the little proportion that is between our Capacities and our Gratifications, between what is deſired and what is enjoy'd. And this Deſire of an Infinite Good will be a far greater Puniſhment to us Hereafter when the Activity of our Faculties ſhall be more invigorated and inlarg'd, if we have not then an Infinite Good to enjoy. 'Twill be at leaſt the worſt ingredient of Hell and Damnation, if not all that is to be underſtood by it. And yet we are ſtill to Conſider that our Will is Infinite only *Ex parte Objecti*, becauſe it deſires an Infinite Good. and not *Ex parte Actûs* becauſe it deſires it infinitely or with an unlimited Force and Activity. For 'tis impoſſible that a Finite Nature ſhould have any Power or Force in it that is ſtrictly infinite, or that any ſuch Act or Operation ſhould proceed from it. But then what would

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the Affliction be if the Act were Infinite as well as the Object, and we were to aſpire after an Infinite Good with an Infinite Deſire! What Conception can Frame a juſt Idea of the Miſery of ſuch a State! And can it be much leſs for an Infinite Intelligence to have only a Finite Intelligible for its Object? But there is Nothing Painful or Afflictive in the Condition of the Supremely and Completely Bleſſed. And therefore we muſt Conclude that as the Infinite Will of God has a Good fully Commenſurate and Adequate to its unlimited Activity, whereon it may Center and Repoſe its Weight, ſo the Infinite Underſtanding of God has alſo an Infinite *Intelligible* for its Object. And ſince the Formal Object of Underſtanding in General, and Conſequently of the Divine, is Truth (as that of the Will is Good) hence it follows again that Truth muſt needs be of an Infinite Nature.

17. And do we not find it ſo when we Convert our ſelves to it by Study and Meditation? When we apply our Minds to the Contemplation of Truth, and ſet our ſelves

ſelves to muſe and think, do we not find that we launch forth into a vaſt intelligible Sea, that has neither Bottom nor Shore? And the more we think and the more we Meditate are we not ſtill more and more convinc'd of this, and do we not diſcover the further we go in our Intellectual Progreſs, that there ſtill lies more and more beyond us, ſo that the more we advance in the Knowledge of Truth the more we inlarge Our Idea of it, as the greateſt Travellers think moſt Magnificently of the World? Do we not find as in a Spatious Campaigne, ſo in the immenſe Field of Truth, that our Eye wearies, and our Sight loſes it ſelf in the boundleſs Proſpect, and that beſides the clear view which we have of a few things at a little diſtance from us, there lie all round us vaſt Tracts unmeaſurably diffuſed, whereof we have only Confuſe and indiſtinct Images, like the Faint Blew of the far diſtant Hills? Are not the Relations and Combinations of things with one another Infinite, and ſhould but one link in this Endleſs Chain be alter'd would not innume-

numerable Alterations enſue upon it? Should but One Propoſition that is Falſe be ſuppoſed True, or One that is True be ſuppoſed Falſe, what Underſtanding but the Divine could go on with the Train of New Conſequences that would reſult from ſuch a Suppoſition? I ſay *New* Conſequences, For we are to conſider that beſides the *Abſolute Syſteme* of Truth which contains the Relations of Ideas with their ſettled Coherencies and Dependencies one upon another according as they really ſtand in their Natural Order, there is a Secondary Syſteme of Truth which I may call *Hypothetical*, that reſults from any ſuppoſed Change made in the Abſolute Syſteme, whence will ſtill ariſe new and new Conſequences even to Infinity. But not to conſider Hypothetical Truth, can the Bounds of that which is Abſolute be ever fix'd, or its Stock ever Exhauſted? Does it not after all the Study that has been employ'd about it, and the Numberleſs Number of Volumns that have been written upon it furniſh perpetual matter for our Contemplation, and is it not a

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Subject for everlaſting Thoughts and Conſiderations? Has it not been the great Reſearch of the Thoughtful and Inquiſitive for many Ages, and yet does not every Age refine upon its Predeceſſour, and produce New Diſcoveries? Are not the Sciences continually improved, and yet are there not ſtill Depths in every Science which no Line of Thought can ever Fathom? What a vaſt Fecundity is there in ſome plain ſimple Propoſitions, nay who can number the Concluſions that may be drawn from any one Principle! Take the moſt ſimple Figure in Geometry, and where is the Mathematician who after a Thouſand Years Study can reckon up all the Properties that may be affirm'd of it, both as Abſolutely Conſider'd, and as it ſtands in relation to other Figures? And what then ſhall we think of the whole Science in all its Branches and Dependencies, Particularly of *Algebra*, the Main Ocean of this Bottomleſs Sea? And what ſhall we ſay of Metaphyſick's, another unmeaſurable Abyſſe, and what of the endleſs Circle of Truth, if not the

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ſame which one of *Job*'s Friends ſays of God, *Canſt thou by ſearching find out* Truth, *Canſt thou find her out unto Perfection? It is as high as Heaven, what canſt thou do? deeper than Hell, what canſt thou know? The Meaſure thereof is longer than the Earth, and broader than the Sea.* And that becauſe they after all are Finite, whereas this is truly and ſtrictly Infinite. Which by the way ſufficiently proves a God, and that this God is Truth, whoſe Eternal and Glorious Majeſty be Bleſſed for Ever.

Job 11. 7.

18. But then let us Conſider, if Truth be indeed (as you ſee) of an Infinite Nature, then to prove that Human Reaſon is not fully adequate to it, does not intirely poſſeſs it, nor all over and wholly comprehend it, and conſequently cannot be the Meaſure of it, there will be no need of laying open the great Weakneſs and Deficiency of our Underſtanding: I need not repreſent the Imperfection of its Light, nor the Shortneſs of its Views, nor the Slenderneſs of its Attainments, nor the very Narrow Extent of its Knowledge,

ledge, nor the very little Progreſs it is able to make in the Contemplation and Comprehenſion of Truth; That there are a great many things whereof we have no Ideas (for which we need go no further for an Inſtance than our own Souls) and that even where we have Ideas of things we cannot always diſcern the Relations and Connexions that are between them, and that either for want of ſufficient Clearneſs in the Ideas themſelves to have their Relations perceived immediately without comparing them with other mediate Ideas, or elſe for want of ſuch due and proper Mediums wherewith to compare them, and that therefore the extent of our Knowledge is not only vaſtly exceeded by the Natures of things, but alſo very Conſiderably even by our own Ideas, there being many things whereof we have Ideas, and ſometimes very clear ones too, and yet which we know no more how to reaſon upon or diſcourſe of intelligibly, or with any Certainty, than we do of thoſe things whereof we have no Ideas at all, being, for Example,

ample, no more able to tell what proportion ſuch a Circle bears to ſuch a Square though we have clear Ideas of both, than we are to tell what proportion there is between Angels and our own Souls, things whereof we have no Ideas. A very remarkable Inſtance of the Shortneſs and Contractedneſs of our Underſtandings, which it ſeems are not only deſtitute of the Ideas of many things, and Conſequently of the knowledge of them (it being impoſſible that the extent of our knowledge ſhould exceed that of our Ideas) but are alſo Blind to thoſe very Ideas which they have, and cannot ſee even when they have the advantage of the Light. But I ſay I need not preſent my Reader with a Night-piece of Human Reaſon, deſcribe great Blindneſs and groſs Darkneſs, how ignorant ſhe is when ſhe does not adventure to judge, and how Erroneous when ſhe does, ſtumbling and falling (as is uſual in the dark) out of one miſtake into another, out of one Errour into another, either by imbracing falſe Principles, or by drawing wrong Con-

Concluſions from true ones, ſo that Ignorance ſeems her ſafeſt Retreat, and to ſuſpend her beſt Wiſdom; Theſe I ſay and ſuch other of our intellectual Infirmities I need not inſiſt upon or make any advantage of, it being ſufficient to conclude the Point in hand that Human Reaſon in its largeſt Capacity and Extent and with all the advantages of both Nature and Artificial improvement is after all but a *Finite* thing (and that to be ſure the moſt Zealous of its Votaries and Advocates muſt confeſs that it is) ſince 'tis impoſſible that what has Bounds ſhould be able totally and adequately to Comprehend what has None, or that *Finite* ſhould be the Meaſure of *Infinite*.

19. I know but of one thing that can with any Pertinency be replied to this Argument, and that is, that though Human Reaſon (as Finite) be not able to comprehend all Truth (as being Infinite) yet however there may perhaps be no one Truth in Particular but what, when preſented to it, may be comprehended by it, and ſo Human Reaſon may be rightly ſaid to

be Adequate and Commenſurate to Truth as *Diſtributively*, though not as *Collectively* conſider'd. But to this I have ſeveral things to return. Firſt of all I ſay that ſuch is the reciprocal dependence and concatenation of Truth that the want of a thorough and intire Comprehenſion of all Truth in its wideſt and moſt diffuſed Extent muſt needs very much Eclipſe the view and darken the Perception of any one Solitary Truth in particular, ſo that however we may have ſome tolerable Perception of it, and ſuch as we may call Clear in Compariſon of ſome other Truths which we do not ſee ſo clearly, yet it cannot be near ſo Clear and Diſtinct a Perception, as that Infinite Being has of it who ſees not only the Truth it ſelf, but alſo the Manifold Relation, Connexion, and Combination that it has with all other Truths. The difference between theſe two ways of Perception being of a like Nature with that which is between ſeeing a Propoſition as it ſtands ſingly by it ſelf, and ſeeing the ſame Propoſition with all its Relations and Depen-

Dependencies, and in conjunction with the whole Context and Coherence of the Diſcourſe whereof it is a Part. I ſay again Secondly, that though we may have a competent Perception of ſome plain and ſimple Truths without purſuing them thorough all the Relations and Dependencies that they have with other Truths (ſince otherwiſe, as I have hinted already, we ſhould be able to underſtand nothing, and every thing would be above Reaſon) yet however we do not know but that there may be ſome Truths of ſuch a Nature as not to be underſtood without the adequate Comprehenſion of thoſe Relations and Dependencies; which ſince we have not, we do not nor can ever know but that there may be ſome Truths that are ſo above us as to be out of our Reach, and to lie beyond all poſſibility of Comprehenſion, and conſequently that Human Reaſon is not adequate and commenſurate to Truth even *Diſtributively* conſider'd. I ſay we do not know, and 'tis impoſſible we ſhould ever know but that thus it may be. For how ſhould we be

able to know it, or upon what ſhall we ground this our Knowledge? It muſt be either upon the Natural Force and Penetration of our Underſtandings, or upon our Actual Views and Perceptions, or upon the Nature of Truth it ſelf. As for the Capacity of our Underſtandings though we do not know the preciſe and exact Bounds and Limits of it, yet we know in the general that it is Finite, and has its fix'd and determinate Meaſure, which it would ſtrive in vain to exceed. As for the Nature of Truth, that we both experiment, and from the foregoing Conſiderations muſt of neceſſity conclude to be Infinite. And what Ground of Aſſurance can we have from either or both of theſe, which are apt rather to lay a Foundation of Diffidence and Diſtruſt? And then as for our actual Views and Perceptions, though we ſhould ſuppoſe them to have been hitherto never ſo clear and diſtinct, never ſo numerous and extenſive, and never ſo fortunate and ſucceſsful, ſo that our Victorious Underſtandings never yet met with a Baffle, nor ſounded a retreat

retreat from a too difficult and impregnable Theory, ſuppoſe in one word, that we never yet applied our minds to the conſideration of any one Truth but what we fully comprehended and were perfect Maſters of (which yet he muſt be a very Preſumptuous, or a very little experienc'd Thinker that ſhall affirm of himſelf) how notwithſtanding do we know, conſidering the Finiteneſs of our Intellect, and the Infiniteneſs of Truth, but that there may be Other Truths of a Nature ſo far above us, and ſo diſproportionate to us, as not poſſibly to be Comprehended by us. For we cannot argue here from the paſt Succeſſes and Atchievements of our Underſtandings to the Future, or becauſe there has been nothing hitherto propoſed to us but what we Comprehended, that therefore there can be nothing propoſed but what we can Comprehend. If we conclude thus, we forget the vaſt diſproportion between Truth and Human Reaſon, that the one is Finite and the other Infinite, the due and attentive Conſideration of which would convince us that tho'

we have thought never ſo much, and never ſo well, and comprehended never ſo many Truths, yet for ought we know there may be Truths which our intellectual Sight though aided with all the advantages of Art, that may help the Mind as much as a *Teleſcope* does the Eye, can yet never penetrate, and which (by the way) it may be Worthy of God to reveal to us if 'twere only to Check and Controle the daring Progreſs of our Underſtanding, to make us underſtand our Meaſure and remember that we are but Men, to be ſenſible of the defects of that part upon which we moſt value our ſelves and deſpiſe others, and that even the Light that is in us is but Darkneſs. Whether there be any ſuch Truths I do not now ſay, but only that upon the Suppoſition of the Infinity of Truth 'tis impoſſible for us to be ſure but that there may be ſuch, which is enough to hinder Our Reaſon from being (at leaſt as to us) the Meaſure of Truth, ſince if it be ſo 'tis more than we know, or can poſſibly be aſſured of, which makes it all one (*to us*) as if it were not. For we

cannot

cannot make uſe of it as a Meaſure, or draw any Conſequence from it to the Falſehood, Impoſſibility, or Incredibility of things Incomprehenſible, ſince for ought we know or can know to the Contrary, there may be Truths which we cannot Comprehend.

20. But then I ſay further Thirdly, that the Infinite Nature of Truth will Oblige us to acknowledge that there actually are and muſt be ſuch. For if Truth be Infinite then 'tis plain that we cannot Comprehend it in its full and intire Extent, and ſo much the very Objection ſuppoſes. But then I ſay that as the want of a perfect Comprehenſion of all Truth does very much ſhade and darken the perception of any one ſingle Truth in particular, and that becauſe of the mutual connexion and dependence of things one upon another (as was before obſerv'd) ſo it muſt needs quite Eclipſe and totally Abſcond ſome Truths from our View. For there are ſome Truths ſo very Complex and Abſtruſe, and that lie ſo deep, and, as I may ſay, ſo far within the Bowels of the In-

tellectual Syſteme, that include ſuch a Multitude of Relations, depend upon ſo many Suppoſitions, are the Concluſions of ſo many Premiſſes, preſuppoſe and require the knowledge of ſo many things (of ſome of which it may be we have not ſo much as the ſimple Ideas) have ſuch a Train of Principles Planted and Intrench'd as a Guard before 'em, and draw ſuch an immenſe Retinue of Conſequences after them, and are every way ſo mingled, involv'd and combined with other Truths that they cannot poſſibly be underſtood without an intire and all-comprehenſive view of the whole Rational Syſteme. Inſtances of ſuch Truths abound in every Science. But there is nothing that may furniſh us with ſo ſenſible and palpable an Illuſtration of this Matter as the Order and Meaſure of *Divine Providence*. We are all fully aſſured from the very Notion and Idea of God as involving all poſſible Excellency and Perfection in it, that he is a Being infinitely Wiſe, Good, Juſt and Holy, and Conſequently that his whole Conduct in the Government

vernment of the World muſt neceſſarily carry the Character of all theſe Attributes, and that he cannot poſſibly do any thing contrary or repugnant to any of them any more than he can deny himſelf, or depart from the Eſſential Perfections of his Infinite Nature. And upon this Conſideration is founded the beſt Argument we have for Submiſſion and Reſignation to the Will of God, and Acquieſcence in his Providential Diſpenſations. Thus far then we are all ſatisfied and agreed. And yet it cannot be denied when we come to Particulars, but that there are *Phenomena* in the Moral as well as in the Natural World which are utterly inſolvible, and that a great many of theſe Diſpenſations of Providence are accompanied with deſperate and invincible Difficulties, ſuch as have at once exerciſed and puzzled the thoughts of the moſt inquiſitive in all Ages, and ſtill remain Obſtinate and Unmoveable Objections not only to the *Atheiſts* and *Libertines*, but even to the moſt ſober and intelligent of both Philoſophers and Divines, Men

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of the greateſt Light and Piety, thoſe who beſt underſtand, and do moſt reverence and adore the ways of God. And adore them after all they muſt, for ſo intricate and intangling are the Difficulties, or (by the leave of ſome) I would ſay *Myſteries* of Providence, eſpecially in thoſe dark Scenes of it that relate to the Divine Concourſe and Cooperation with the Will of Man, the Ordination of his Final State, the Order and Diſtribution of Grace, the Permiſſion, Direction and Nice Conduct of Sin, *&c.* that the Capacity of our Underſtanding will not ſerve us to give a clear and unobnoxious account of them. Indeed the diligent and curious Wit of Man has gone a great way in this as well as in Other Matters, and ſeveral Syſtemes and Hypotheſes have been invented about theſe things by Contemplative Spirits, among whom the two very particular Authors of the *Treatiſe* of *Nature* and *Grace*, and of *L'Oeconomie Divine* have I think gone the furtheſt of any. But though ſome of theſe Accounts bid fairer for reception

ception than others, by ſtriking ſome glimmering Light into theſe Abſtruſities, yet ſtill they all agree in this, that they leave a great deal more in the Dark, and labour with Difficulties even where they do Explain: So that after all they diſcover nothing ſo much as their own Shortneſs and Deficiency. In the mean while we know and are moſt certain in the General, that all is right and as it ſhould be in the Conduct of God towards his Creatures, and that he cannot make one falſe Step in the Government of the World. So much we underſtand without Syſtemes, and truly not much more with them. For as for the Particular Scenes of Providence we know not what to make of them; and when we have conſider'd the Diſpenſations of God as much as we can or dare, we find our ſelves after all obliged to confeſs, that though *Righteouſneſs and Judgment are the Habitation of his Seat, yet Clouds and Darkneſs are round about him.* Pſal. 97. 2.

21. But now how comes it to be ſo Dark and Cloudy? How come we to be ſo little able to ſee the particular

ticular Wiſdom, Goodneſs, Juſtice and Holineſs of thoſe ways of God, which in the general we are convinc'd to be ſo Wiſe, Good, Juſt and Holy? Why can we not enter into the *Detail* of Providence? Why even becauſe we do not ſee it throughout, and have not a Comprehenſion of its Univerſal Syſteme. For the Paſſages of Providence are of ſuch a Relative and Complicated Nature, there is ſuch a kind of περιχώρησις or *mutual in-being* or *indwelling* in them, (if I may transfer an Expreſſion hither, commonly applyed to a higher Myſtery) they are ſo interwoven with, and have ſo common a dependance upon one another, that without a Comprehenſive View of the whole *Drama*, we can hardly make any thing of any one Particular *Scene*. Indeed if we could have ſuch a View as that, a View that went round and through, and graſp'd the whole *Area* of that immenſe Circle, we ſhould quickly ſee the Regularity of the moſt uneven and odd-figured Parts, and how wonderfully they conſpired (like the Flats and Sharps of

of Muſick) to the Order and Harmony of that excellent and ſurprizing Beauty that reſults from them. But being not able to reach this, we are not competent Judges of the reſt, (which by the way ſhould repreſs our forwardneſs to ſit in Judgment upon things ſo far above the Cognizance of our Court); and though we know the Meaſures of God to be all Wiſe, Good, Juſt and Holy, yet this is only an *implicit* Knowledge, founded upon an External Evidence only (much after the ſame manner as it is in Faith) even the general Conception we have of the Divine Perfection, without any clear and immediate diſcernment of the Internal Connexion that is between the things themſelves. We believe 'tis all well and right becauſe the Infinitely Wiſe God ſits at the Helm; but then again, becauſe he is ſo Infinitely Wiſe we cannot ſound the Depths of his Wiſdom, (as indeed it would be very ſtrange if an Infinitely Wiſe Agent ſhould not be able to do things Wiſely, and yet beyond our Underſtanding) nor reconcile all his particular proceedings

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to the Laws of Reaſon and Equity; but the more we ſtudy about theſe things the more we are at a loſs, the further we wade into this Sea the deeper we find it, till at laſt we find our ſelves obliged to cry out with the moſt inſpired Apoſtle, *O the Depth of the Riches both of the Wiſdom and Knowledge of God, how unſearchable are his Judgments, and his Ways paſt finding out!* And all for want of an Intire and Comprehenſive View of them. For if the Knowledge of ſome very Compounded Truths be impoſſible without the Clear Perception of the Simple Principles upon which they depend; and a Man would to no purpoſe beat his Brains about the Conſideration of *Conical Sections*, till he has firſt well poſſeſſed himſelf of Ordinary Geometry; how much leſs then (may we conclude) are the Intricate and very Complicated Events of Divine Providence to be unravel'd without a Collected and Simultaneous Idea of the Univerſal Syſteme whereof they are parts, to which they relate, and from their *Concentricity* with which they receive all

Rom. 11. 33.

their

their Order and Beauty, but which is in a manner loſt to us for want of Compaſs enough in our Proſpect. By which ſingle Inſtance it appears (among many others that might have been given) how the Incapacity of Comprehending Truth in its whole Extent may diſable us from Comprehending many Particular Truths; and conſequently, that the ſame Infinity of Truth which hinders us from Comprehending it according to that Extent, muſt alſo hinder us as much from being able to comprehend every Particular Truth. So then there will be Particular Truths which are Incomprehenſible by us, and conſequently Human Reaſon is not Commenſurate to all Truth, not only as Collectively, but even as Diſtributively Conſider'd. And therefore not as *Diſtributively*, becauſe not as *Collectively*.

22. But then to raiſe our Speculation a little higher, I conſider yet further, that the Infinity of Truth is not only an Infinity of *Extent*, but alſo an Infinity of *Nature*, that is, that the Compaſs of Truth is not only Boundleſs and illimited, and that

that it has in it an inexhauſtible Spring, which like the Source of Light, is never to be drawn dry by the moſt thirſty draught of the whole Intellectual World, but alſo that there are Particular Truths of a Nature truely infinite, and by conſequence incomprehenſible to any Underſtanding that is not ſo. For we are here to recollect, what has been already ſhewn, that Truth is Conſubſtantial and Coeſſential with God and with the Divine Ideas. Now though theſe Ideas are all equally of the Eſſence and Nature of God, and ſo far equally Divine (it being impoſſible that there ſhould be any thing in God that is not God) yet there is this general and very remarkable Difference between them, that ſome of theſe Divine Ideas are Abſolute, and ſome Relative. That is, ſome are of the Eſſence of God Simply and Abſolutely as He is in Himſelf, without any Relation to any thing out of Himſelf. And others again are of the Eſſence of God conſider'd purely in Relation to things without Him either in Act or in Poſſibility, and only ſo far forth

as

as the Divine Eſſence is repreſentative of Creatures. Or if you will, thus: We may conſider a twofold Being in Ideas, *Eſſe Reale*, and *Eſſe Ideale* or *Repreſentativum*. Some Ideas are Divine, not only according to their *Eſſe Reale* (for ſo they are all) but alſo according to their *Eſſe Repreſentativum*, as repreſenting God to the Mind that Contemplates them. Others again are Divine only according to their *Eſſe Reale*, being indeed of the Subſtance of God, but not repreſenting him, but his Creatures, and ſo are Divine in the ſame ſenſe as the Idea of a Body is Spiritual, *viz. Eſſentially* only, not *Repreſentatively*. Which Diverſity indeed reſolves into the former, becauſe they are of the Eſſence of God, not as it is abſolutely in it ſelf, but only as it is repreſentative of Creatures, according to ſuch a certain Modality and Limitation of Perfection. And accordingly though they are truly *Divine Ideas* as well as the other, yet they are not ſaid to be *Ideas of God*, as not repreſenting *him*, but his Creatures. The ſhort is, The Eſſence of God may be con-

ſider'd either as it is abſolutely in it ſelf according to its Infinite Simplicity, or as it is in relation to, and repreſentative of things without, either of an Actual, or of a Poſſible Exiſtence. And ſo the Ideas or Eſſential Perfections of God are of two ſorts: Either ſuch as are of the Eſſence of God conſider'd in the firſt ſenſe, as it is in it ſelf, or elſe ſuch as are of the ſame Divine Eſſence only in the ſecond ſenſe, as far forth as that Eſſence is repreſentative of things out of it ſelf; upon which by the way, I ſuppoſe, muſt be grounded (if we will reſolve things into their laſt Principle) the common diſtinction of the Attributes of God into *Communicable* and *Incommunicable*. The *Incommunicable* Attributes of God being thoſe Perfections that are of the Divine Eſſence Simply and Abſolutely conſider'd as it is in it ſelf; and the *Communicable* thoſe that belong to the Divine Eſſence Relatively conſider'd, and as repreſentative of Creatures, to whom accordingly they are in their Meaſure truly applicable; whereas the former are not, but are peculiar to God

God alone; which ſufficiently ſhews the difference between this double order of Divine Ideas. But to make it yet more intelligible by an Inſtance. The Idea of the Divine *Immenſity*, or that *Perfection* in God which we call his Immenſity, is of the Eſſence of God according to the firſt ſenſe, as it is ſimply and abſolutely in it ſelf; being no other than the Subſtance of God as it is univerſally diffuſed, intirely preſent in, and filling all places without being circumſcribed by any, yet without any Local Extenſion. But now the Idea of *Extenſion*, or that Perfection in God which vertually, eminently, and *modo intelligibili*, anſwers to Extenſion (and is therefore frequently called by Mr. *Malebranch*, *L' étenduë intelligible*) is of the Subſtance of God, not as it is in it ſelf ſimply and abſolutely, but only as far forth as it is repreſentative of Matter, or Body, and imitable or participable by it, according to thoſe Limitations and Imperfections which belong to that kind of Being, and which are repreſented by this its Idea. I know not whether I expreſs my ſelf to

the Conception of every Reader, but I am ſufficiently Clear and Intelligible to my ſelf; and whoever is not much wanting either in *Metaphyſics*, or in *Attention*, cannot I think well miſs my Meaning.

23 Now the uſe that I make of this Speculation to the preſent purpoſe is this: Thoſe Ideas which are of the Eſſence of God only as that Divine Eſſence, according to ſome certain Limitations and inadequate Conſiderations of it, is repreſentative of Creatures, muſt be conſider'd by us as of a Finite Nature. Becauſe however truly Divine and of the Eſſence of God, yet not as it is abſolutely and ſimply in it ſelf, but only as it is in relation to Creatures; that is, as partially and inadequately conſider'd, according to certain Abſtractions and Limitations of Entity and Perfection, ſuch as the things whereof they are Ideas do require. And accordingly ſuch Ideas are ordinarily ſaid, not to be the Ideas of God who is Infinite (for they do not repreſent *him*, though Eſſential to him) but to be the Ideas of Creatures, who are Finite. They are indeed

indeed *Divine Ideas*, becauſe Eſſential to God; but they are not *Ideas of God*, becauſe they are of the Divine Eſſence only as it relates to Creatures, and is repreſentative of *them*. Of Creatures therefore they are the Ideas, and God in ſeeing them is not properly ſaid to ſee himſelf, (though they are of himſelf) but to ſee *Creatures*; becauſe though they are of his Divine Eſſence, yet 'tis only according to ſuch Preciſions, Limitations and Inadequations of it as to be expreſſive and repreſentative of their Finite Perfections. As therefore the Realities which theſe Ideas repreſent are Finite, ſo theſe Ideas muſt be conceiv'd by us as Finite too; it being impoſſible that Infinite conſider'd as Infinite, ſhould be repreſentative of what is Finite. And as theſe Ideas are Finite, ſo are they alſo by Conſequence ſo Proportionate, and of a Meaſure ſo adjuſted to Finite Underſtandings, as to be Intelligible by them, and within the Poſſibility of their Comprehenſion; which muſt alſo in like manner be concluded of all thoſe Truths which are Conſubſtantial to

them. And accordingly the Experiment anſwers the Theory. We find that not only contingent Truths that regard only the Actualities and Exiſtencies of Things, ſuch as matters of Fact, Human Events, *&c.* but even a great many of thoſe which are Ideal and Neceſſary, and concern only the Abſtract Reaſons and Eſſences of Things independently on their Actual Exiſtence, are Comprehenſible by us, as in *Metaphyſics* and *Geometry*, in the Contemplation of which Sciences we meet with a great many things which we well underſtand, and whereof we have Clear Ideas and Conceptions.

24. But now it is not thus with the Ideas of the firſt Order, nor with their Truths. Though thoſe Divine Ideas which appertain to the Eſſence of God only as repreſentative of Creatures, be both Finite and Comprehenſible by limited Underſtandings, (which indeed otherwiſe would not be capable of any Science) yet theſe *Abſolute* Ideas which I now ſpeak of, are neither Finite nor Comprehenſible. For

theſe

theſe Ideas are of the very Eſſence and Subſtance of God as it is in it ſelf purely and ſeparately conſider'd according to its ſimple and abſolute Nature, and not as it is in relation to Creatures, or as repreſentative of any Reality out of it ſelf. And accordingly God in contemplating theſe Ideas of his may be truly and ſtrictly ſaid to contemplate himſelf; and we alſo in the Contemplation of them do as really contemplate God, and that becauſe they are of his Divine Eſſence ſimply and abſolutely conſider'd as it is in it ſelf, and not as it is in reference to any thing beſides, or out of it ſelf. Theſe Ideas therefore are ſtrictly Infinite (becauſe the Divine Eſſence, as it is in it ſelf ſimply and abſolutely conſider'd is ſo) and conſequently Incomprehenſible by any Finite, and conſequently by Human Underſtanding. God only can Comprehend theſe Ideas, and that becauſe he only can Comprehend himſelf. Human Reaſon indeed has Light enough to diſcover that there are ſuch Ideas and Perfections in God, and is withal able to diſcern enough of them to

raiſe her greateſt Wonder and Devotion, and to make her deſpiſe all other Intelligible Objects in compariſon of theſe *Infinite Grandeurs*; and the Angelic Spirits that wait about the Throne of his Majeſty, and ſtand in a better Light, are able to ſee yet more of them; but neither the one nor the other can Comprehend them fully any more than they can God himſelf, and that becauſe they are God. So that though the other Ideas are Finite and Comprehenſible, theſe are truly Infinite and Incomprehenſible. And of this we have ſufficient Evidence in the Inſtances above propoſed of each. The Idea of *Extenſion* is very Clear and Intelligible to our Minds, as Finite and as Narrowly bounded as they are. We have a very diſtinct View of it, we Perceive it, we Comprehend it. Among all Intelligible Objects there is none that is more clear, nor whereof we have a more adequate and exact Notion. And upon this is founded all that peculiar Clearneſs, Evidence and Certainty that is in the *Geometric* Sciences, which alone have the happineſs to be

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be free from Diſputes, and without Conteſtation to find that Truth which the others ſeek after, and that for no other Reaſon but becauſe we have ſo clear and diſtinct a Notion of its general Subject, *Extenſion*. But now as to the * *Divine Immenſity*, ſo far are we from having a Clear Conception of that, that no ſooner do we ſet our ſelves to contemplate this vaſt Idea, but we enter into Clouds and Darkneſs, or rather into ſuch an over-ſhining and inſupportable Light as dazzles and blinds our Eyes, yea hurts and pains them, till they can no longer indure to gaze, but are forc'd to refreſh themſelves either by letting down their wearied Lids (ſuſpenſe of Thought) or by turning their view upon leſs glorious Objects. In the Meditation of the other Idea we are like Men that wade in a River where we both ſee and feel the Bottom, and go on for a pretty way together ſmoothly and without much difficulty, only now and then meeting

* *I the rather Inſtance in the* Divine Immenſity, *becauſe the Devout Pſalmiſt does herein particularize his Ignorance, making it the Subject of his Aſtoniſhment rather than his Curioſity.* Such Knowledge is too wonderful for me, it is high, I cannot attain unto it, *Pſal.* 139.

meeting with an intangling Weed that lets and incumbers our progreſs. But in the Contemplation of the Infinite Idea of the Divine *Immenſity* we are like men that commit themſelves to the Main Sea, at the very firſt Plunge out of our depth, and ready to be overwhelm'd, ſwallow'd up and loſt in an Abyſs that knows no bottom.

25. I uſe a little Figure and Imagery here the better to impreſs this upon the *Imagination* of thoſe who are not ſo well habituated to the Conception of things by *Pure Intellection*, but the thing it ſelf needs none of the advantages of the Metaphorical way, being ſtrictly and ſeverely true. And by theſe two Inſtances it may appear what a vaſt difference there is between theſe two ſorts of the Divine Ideas, the Abſolute and the Relative, thoſe that are of the Eſſence of God as in himſelf, and thoſe that are of the ſame Divine Eſſence as it is in relation to Creatures. The Firſt, Infinite and Incomprehenſible, the Second, Finite and Comprehenſible. For you ſee here the Idea of Extenſion is clear

clear and diſtinct, and ſuch as we can fully and adequately Conceive, but the Idea of the Divine Immenſity, has nothing clear and diſtinct in it, but is all over Darkneſs and Obſcurity, and ſuch as quite aſtoniſhes and confounds us with a Thouſand difficulties upon the firſt application of our Thoughts to it, as indeed do all the *Abſolute* Attributes and Perfections of God, which are all equally Infinite, and equally incomprehenſible to Finite Spirits, however they may be able to Comprehend that which in the Eſſence of God is *repreſentative* of, and carries a *Relation* to thoſe Realities which either actually do, or poſſibly may exiſt out of it. And in this I ſay no more (ſetting aſide only the *Rationale* of the thing) than thoſe who tell us that the *Incommunicable* Attributes of God are Infinite and Incomprehenſible. They are ſo. But what is it that makes them Infinite and Incomprehenſible? Even the ſame that makes them *Incommunicable*, *viz.* their being of the Eſſence of God as it is in it ſelf according to its Abſolute Simplicity, and

and not as it is in Relation to Creatures. For 'tis moſt evident that the Eſſence of God as it is ſimply and Abſolutely in it ſelf is every way Infinite and Incomprehenſible, and therefore all thoſe Ideas and Perfections of his which are in this Abſolute Senſe Eſſential to him muſt be alſo of an alike Infinite and Incomprehenſible Nature. Which by the way may ſerve to Silence the preſumptuous Cavils of thoſe who draw Objections againſt the Exiſtence of God from the incomprehenſibility of his Attributes, ſince if there be a God he muſt have incomprehenſible Attributes, which unleſs we aſcribe to him we do not think either rightly or worthily of him.

26. But to reſume our Point, we ſee then here what a large Field is now open'd to our Proſpect of Infinite and Incomprehenſible Truths, even of a Compaſs as large as the Abſolute Ideas and Perfections of the Divine Eſſence. For though all Created things are of a Finite Nature, and though even the Divine Ideas that repreſent them, as far as repre-

repreſentative of them, muſt fall under the ſame limited Conſideration, yet thoſe Abſolute Ideas and Perfections of God that have no ſuch external Reference, but are of the Divine Eſſence as it is in its pure, ſimple, abſtracted Self, muſt neceſſarily partake of the Divine Infinity, and be as unbounded as God himſelf. And ſince Truth (as was before obſerv'd) is Coeſſential and Conſubſtantial with the Divine Ideas, I further Conclude, that though thoſe Truths which regard the Actualities and Exiſtencies of things, or if you pleaſe, things that do actually exiſt, be Finite, becauſe the things themſelves are ſo, and though even thoſe that regard the Divine Ideas themſelves are alſo Finite ſuppoſing the Ideas to be of the inferiour Order, ſuch as are of the Divine Eſſence only as it is repreſentative of, and in relation to Creatures, yet thoſe Truths which reſpect thoſe Divine Ideas of the Superiour Order, that are of the Abſolute Eſſence of God as it is in it ſelf purely and ſimply Conſider'd, and ſo are not only *Eſſentially*, but even

even *Repreſentatively* Divine, as truly repreſenting God, and being in a ſtrict and proper ſenſe *his* Ideas, I ſay the Truths of this Order and Character muſt neceſſarily be of a Nature far exalted above all Creatures, yea above all other Ideal Truths, even as far as what is of the Simple and Abſolute Eſſence of God tranſcends that which in the ſame Eſſence is only Relative to things without, and can therefore be no leſs than Infinite. We have here then an Order of Infinite Truths, even all thoſe which regard the Abſolute Ideas and Perfections of God. Theſe Divine Ideas and Perfections are all Infinite, as that Glorious Eſſence whoſe Ideas they are and whom they repreſent, and ſo alſo are the Sublime Truths which reſult from them. They are of a Nature ſtrictly Infinite, and if Infinite then by Conſequence *Incomprehenſible*, I mean to all underſtandings that are not ſo. For as Nothing Finite has Reality enough to repreſent Infinite, ſo neither can any thing Finite have Capacity enough to Comprehend it. For as the actual knowledge of any intelligent Being can never

never exceed its intellectual Power, ſo neither can its Power exceed the meaſure of its Eſſence. A Finite Being therefore muſt have a Finite Underſtanding, and a Finite Underſtanding muſt have a Finite Perception. Since then our Underſtandings are Finite, 'tis plain that our Perception of Infinite muſt alſo be Finite. 'Tis true indeed that *Objective Reality* which we contemplate when we think upon Infinite has no Limits, and ſo we may be ſaid in ſome reſpect to have an *Infinite Thought*, as far as the Operation of the Mind may be denominated from the quality of the Object, but yet ſtill we think according to the Meaſure of our Nature, and our *Perception* of Infinite can be no more at the moſt than Finite. But now a Finite Perception bears no proportion to an Infinite Intelligible, beſides that to perceive ſuch an Object after a Finite manner is not to perceive it as it is, but only Partially and inadequately. But now a Partial and inadequate Perception of a thing can never be ſaid to be a Comprehenſion of that thing,

thing, even though the thing be Finite, much leſs then when it is Infinite. Whereby it plainly appears that if there be an Order of *Infinite* Truths the ſame will alſo be *Incomprehenſible* Ones, and ſince again as I have ſhewn there is an Order of ſuch Truths, even all thoſe that regard the Abſolute Ideas and Perfections of the Divine Eſſence, it clearly follows that there is an Order of Incomprehenſible Truths, and Conſequently that Human Reaſon is not the Meaſure of Truth, even *Diſtributively* conſider'd, ſince there are Particular Truths which it cannot Comprehend; which was the thing to be proved.

27. And of all this we may have a plain and viſible illuſtration in the foremention'd Inſtance of the *Divine Immenſity*. This is an Idea or Perfection of God that is truely Infinite, as being of his Divine Eſſence as it is Abſolutely in it ſelf, and not as in Order to, or repreſentative of Creatures; And as Infinite 'tis alſo Incomprehenſible by any but God himſelf. Accordingly the Complex Truth that regards this Abſolute

Idea

Idea of God is alſo Infinite, and as ſuch Incomprehenſible. As appears in this Propoſition, *God is Immenſe*, which is an Infinite and Incomprehenſible Truth. We find it is ſo *a Poſteriori* by caſting the view of our Underſtandings upon it. And we find it muſt be ſo *a Priori* by reaſoning upon the Principles already laid down and eſtabliſh'd. And to prevent all vain cavilling in this matter I further add, that though we could ſuppoſe the Truths that reſult from Infinite Ideas not to be Infinite (which yet we cannot by reaſon of their real Identity and Coeſſentiality with thoſe Ideas) yet however they muſt upon another account be incomprehenſible, even upon the Incomprehenſibility of thoſe Ideas. For if the Ideas whereof a Truth conſiſts be incomprehenſible, as they muſt be if they are Infinite, that alone would be enough to hinder us from being able to Comprehend ſuch a Truth, it being impoſſible we ſhould thoroughly underſtand the Relations or Habitudes between thoſe Ideas whoſe Simple Natures (the Foundation of thoſe Habitudes)

we do not Comprehend. For if in Finite things the not having a clear and adequate Idea of a thing makes us unable to judge of the Truth or Falſhood of many Propoſitions concerning that thing (whereof there are a multitude of Inſtances in *Morality*, eſpecially in Queſtions relating to the *Soul* of Man, which muſt for ever lie undetermin'd merely for want of our having a clear Idea of that Noble Eſſence) much more then in things Infinite will the not having a Comprehenſion of the Ideas incapacitate us from Comprehending the Truths that Reſult from them, which will therefore be as incomprehenſible as if they were (what indeed they are) in themſelves Infinite.

28. I have hitherto ſhewn the Incomprehenſibility of Truth by Human Reaſon, and conſequently that Human Reaſon is not the Meaſure of Truth, from the joynt Conſideration of each. Only with this difference. I have conſider'd and repreſented Truth Abſolutely as it is in it ſelf, according to its own Infinite and unmeaſurable Nature. But

as

as for Human Reaſon I have conſider'd that only as *Finite*, as ſuppoſing that ſufficient to my preſent Purpoſe, and that there was no need of placing it in any other Light. For after it hath been ſhewn that Truth is Infinite, to prove that Human Reaſon cannot be the Meaſure of it, it is certainly enough to Conſider it as a Bounded Power, without repreſenting how very ſtrait and narrow its Bounds are, ſince whatever is Finite can never meaſure Infinite. But then if ſo, what if we add the other Conſideration to it? If the bare Finiteneſs of Human Underſtanding (a defect common to it with all Created Intelligencies) renders it uncapable of Comprehending Truth, and Conſequently of being the Meaſure of it, how much more then does the littleneſs and narrowneſs of its Bounds contribute to heighten that incapacity? If the having *any* limits does ſo unqualifie it for the adequate Comprehenſion of Truth, how then does the having ſo very ſhort and ſtrait ones? Strait indeed by Natural and Original Conſtitution, but much more

yet retrench'd by Sin, and by all thoſe Paſſions, Prejudices, deordinate Affections and Evil Cuſtoms which are the Effects and Conſequences of Sin, and which have now ſo darken'd our Minds, and drawn ſuch a groſs Film over our Intellectual Sight that we can hardly diſtinguiſh Day from Night, Clearneſs from Obſcurity, Truth from Falſhood, and are able to ſee but ſo very little a way into the Works of God (much leſs into the Nature of God himſelf) that we need nothing elſe to depreſs and humble our Pride and Vanity than that very Knowledge of ours which puffs us up. So very narrow in its Compaſs and Extent, ſo very Shallow and Superficial in its Depth, ſo very Confuſe and Obſcure in its Light, ſo very uncertain and conjectural in its Ground, and ſo every way defective and imperfect is it. But how then can we ſound the Depth of Truth with ſo ſhort a Line? A Bottomleſs Depth with (I will not ſay a Finite, but) ſo very ſcanty a Meaſure? And what an extravagant Folly and Weakneſs, not to ſay Pride and Vanity

Vanity is it to fancy that we can? It would be a Vain Preſumption in an Angel, but ſure the very Madneſs and Diſtraction of Impudence in Man, who may with leſs defiance to Sence and Reaſon think to graſp the Ocean within the hollow of his hand, than to Comprehend and Meaſure Truth, Infinite Boundleſs Truth, not only with Finite, but ſo very limited Capacities.

29. But ſuppoſe Truth were not (what we have ſhewn it to be) *Infinite*, but had Bounds as well as our Reaſon, yet unleſs it had the *Same*, our Reaſon cannot be Commenſurate to it, or the Meaſure of it. But does the ſuppoſition of its having Limits infer that it has the ſame? No, For though Finite, its Bounds may poſſibly be extended further than thoſe of our Underſtandings, and how can we be ſure that they are not? We cannot then even upon this ſuppoſition be ſure that our Reaſon is the Meaſure of Truth, and therefore it is all one as to us (as I ſaid before) as if it were not ſo, foraſmuch as we cannot uſe it as a Meaſure by drawing

any Conſequences from it concerning the Falſhood or impoſſibility of things upon the account of our inability to Comprehend them, ſince for ought we know the Limits of Truth though we ſhould ſuppoſe it Finite, may yet exceed, and that very greatly too, thoſe of our Rational Faculties. And Conſidering both the Natural and the Superacceſſory defects of them it is very reaſonable to think that they do.

30. Some Eſſences perhaps there may be (though even this again is more than we know) that ſit ſo high in the Intellectual Form as to be able to Comprehend all that is Finite, ſo that the only reaſon why they have not an adequate Comprehenſion of Truth at large is becauſe it is indeed Infinite. But there is no Neceſſity, nor ſo much as Probability that Human Reaſon ſhould be of ſo rais'd an Order that nothing but *Infinity* ſhould tranſcend its Comprehenſion. And it muſt be a ſtrange Compoſition of Pride and Self-love that can make us fancy that it is; ſomething like that, only much more extravagant, which poſſeſſes

poſſeſſes the diſturb'd Heads of ſome in *Bedlam*, and makes them Conceit themſelves Kings and Emperours in the midſt of their *Irons*, *Rags*, and *Straw*. What though Truth were Finite, and ſome Underſtandings too that are ſo were able to meaſure it, why muſt this needs be concluded of *Human* Underſtanding? If a Finite Being were able to Comprehend Truth, why muſt *Man* be that Being? The Scripture tells us he is made lower than the Angels, and how many Orders and Degrees there may be among *them* we know not, nor indeed how many Ranks of Spiritual Beings there may be in the Univerſe whoſe Underſtandings go beyond ours. For who can define the Out-flowings of the Divine Fecundity, or Number the Rounds of the Intellectual Scale? In the mean while though man knows not how many Orders of Intelligent Creatures there are above him, yet 'tis with great Reaſon and Conſent preſumed that there are none below him, ſo that he is placed even by his own Confeſſion in the loweſt Form of the Intellectual Order.

And why then may not his Underſtanding (as much as he values himſelf upon it) be of ſo Shallow a Depth, and ſo low a Size that even *Finite* Objects may be diſproportionate to him? Eſpecially ſince we find him ſo often puzzl'd and gravell'd in Natural things, as alſo in thoſe Ideal Truths that have relation to the Natural and Ectypal World, ſuch as Philoſophical and Mathematical Problems. Or if the Reaſon of any Creature could be the Meaſure of Truth, why ſhould *he* be that Creature, who is ſeated in the very Confines of the Material and Immaterial World, and is as it were the Common-Point where Matter ends and Spirit begins, who brings up the rear of the Intellectual kind, and is both the youngeſt and the *leaſt indow'd* among the Sons of God.

31. Theſe Conſiderations ſufficiently ſhew that there is no Neceſſity, nor ſo much as Probability, that Human Reaſon ſhould be the Meaſure of Truth even upon the Suppoſition of its being Finite. Which indeed is enough of it ſelf to carry the

the Point Contended for as far as the Deſign of the preſent Argument is Concern'd. For if it be not neceſſary that Human Reaſon ſhould be the Meaſure of Truth, then it is Poſſible that it may not be, and if it is Poſſible that it may not, then we can be never Sure that it is, and if we cannot be Sure that it is, then we cannot Uſe it as a Meaſure, which (as I have remarqu'd already and for the Moment of it do here reinculcate) makes it the ſame to all intents and purpoſes as if it were not ſuch at all. But yet to carry our Plea a little higher I further Contend that as the foregoing Conſiderations ſuffice to ſhew that Human Reaſon *may* not, ſo there is One behind that very poſitively Demonſtrates that it *Cannot* be the Meaſure of Truth, even tho' we ſhould allow it to be of a Finite and bounded Nature as well as our own underſtandings.

32. As there are many things whereof our Ideas are very Confuſe and Obſcure, ſo 'tis moſt Certain that there are ſome things whereof we have no Ideas at all, it having not pleas'd the Eternal and Infinite Intel-

Intelligence to Exhibit that in Himſelf which is Repreſentative of thoſe things to our Underſtandings. But now beſides the Difficultys and diſadvantages we ſhall always ly under in the Comprehenſion of things from the Confuſeneſs and Obſcurity of our Ideas, which of it Self will many times render thoſe things, and alſo whatever nearly relates to thoſe things incomprehenſible by us, and beſides that our not having any Ideas of Certain things, is an invincible Bar to all Knowledge and Comprehenſion of thoſe things (unleſs we could be ſuppoſed to be able to ſee without Light) 'tis alſo further Conſiderable that poſſibly the Knowledge of that Truth which we ſet our Selves to Comprehend, and whereof we have the Ideas, may depend upon the truth of another thing whereof we have no Idea. If it ſhould be ſo tho Truth in general be never ſo Finite, or the Particular Truth we would Contemplate be never ſo Finite, 'tis plain we ſhall be no more able to Comprehend it than if it were Infinite. Now I ſay that 'tis not only Poſſible that this

this may be the Caſe (which yet of it Self as I have again and again Noted is ſufficient to debar us from uſing our Reaſon as the Meaſure of Truth) but there are alſo ſome Inſtances wherein it appears actually to be ſo. We know well enough what we mean by *Liberty* and Contingency, and are withal well aſſured that we are Free Agents. We have alſo a Sufficient Notion of *Preſcience*, and are alſo no leſs aſſured of the Reality of it, And becauſe both theſe are true, and there can be no real repugnance between one Truth and another we are alſo by Conſequence aſſured that there is a good Harmony and Agreement between them, and that they are Conſiſtent with each other. But now how to adjuſt their apparent Oppoſition, or reconcile thoſe Inſtances of ſeeming Contradiction and inconſiſtency wherewith they preſs us, this we neither Know nor are able with all our Meditation to Comprehend, and that becauſe we have not an Idea of the Human Soul, without which there is no poſſibility of Comprehending how its Free Workings may

may be the Objects of Preſcience, tho our Ideas of Preſcience and Liberty were never ſo Clear. Or if this Inſtance ſhall not be thought ſo proper becauſe the Men with whom our preſent Concern lies are pleas'd to diſown the Doctrine of Preſcience, let me deſire them to Conſider whether there be not many other Difficulties concerning Human Liberty, beſides that taken from, *Preſcience*, which they are no more able to get over than they are that. And that for the very ſame Reaſon, even becauſe they have not an Idea of the Soul, upon the Knowledge of which the Solution of thoſe, as well as ſome other Difficulties in Morality, does Neceſſarily depend. Or if they pleaſe let them take an Inſtance of a Phyſical Nature. We know well enough what it is to be in a Place, and we know alſo as well what it is to be Coextended to a Place. But now how Being in a Place may be without Coextenſion to a Place, this is what we cannot Comprehend (tho as to the thing it Self, upon other Conſiderations conſtrain'd to grant it) and that becauſe we are igno-

ignorant of the general Nature of *Spirit*, upon the clear Conception of which the Comprehenſion of the other does ſo depend that it cannot be had without it. And indeed we may conclude in general that when ever we have clear Ideas of things, and yet are not able to Comprehend the Truth of them, 'tis becauſe the Knowledge of thoſe things depends upon the Truth of ſomething elſe whereof we have either no Idea, or not ſuch as is ſufficiently Clear. Which muſt be the true Reaſon of the hitherto preſumed impoſſibility of finding out the exact Proportion between a *Circle* and a *Square*. Why, Circle and Square are very Intelligible things, and how come we then not to be able to determin the preciſe and juſt Proportion that is between them: It cannot be from any Obſcurity in the things themſelves, much leſs from our want of having Ideas of them, for we have as clear and exact Ideas of theſe Figures as we can have of any thing in the World. It muſt be therefore becauſe the Knowledge of their Proportion depends upon the Knowledge of

of ſome other thing whereof the Idea fails us, which till we are poſſeſs'd of we ſhall in vain endeavour to diſcover the other. Whereby it plainly appears that we are not only uncapable of Comprehending thoſe Truths that relate to things whereof we have no Ideas, but that even where we have Ideas, and thoſe very Clear ones too we may be as far from Comprehending a Truth as if we had none merely upon the account of the Dependence which that Truth has upon ſome other thing whereof we have not, at leaſt a juſt, Idea. Which ſingle Conſideration is enough for ever to ſpoil *Human Reaſon* for ſetting up for the *Meaſure* of *Truth*, even upon the Suppoſition of its being Finite. So very Falſe is that arrogant Aſſertion of a Modern Philoſopher, *Quæcunque exiſtunt humanæ Menti perveſtigabilia, præterquam Infinitum.* Whatever is may be thoroughly Comprehended by the Mind of Man, except Infinite. And again. *Unum duntaxat eſt quod omnem mentis noſtræ vim longiſſime excedit, ipſáq; ſuâ Naturâ, ut in ſe eſt, ab eâ Cognoſci nequit,* Infinitum *puta.*

Gerardi de Vries Profeſſoris Ultrajectini, exercitationes rationales de Deo, Divinisq; Perfectionibus. Pag. 248.

There

There is but one only thing that far exceeds the Force and reach of our Mind, and that cannot of its own very Nature be known by it as it is in it ſelf, namely *Infinite*. What but One thing excepted from the Verge, and placed beyond the reach of Human Knowledge? 'Tis well that One thing is a pretty large one, but ſure the Authour was ignorant of ſomething elſe, that is *Himſelf*, or elſe he could never have advanc'd ſuch a Crude and ill-conſider'd a Propoſition.

33. And thus I have ſhewn at large in a rational way by arguing *a priori*, and from the Nature of things, that Human Reaſon is not the Meaſure of Truth, and that even upon the moſt Liberal Suppoſition of its being Finite; And if it be not ſo ſuppoſing Truth to be Finite, much leſs is it ſuppoſing it (what it has been prov'd to be) of an Infinite Nature. If upon the Former Suppoſition it exceeds the Proportion of our Reaſon, certainly upon the latter there will be no Proportion between them. But whether our Reaſon bears no Proportion

portion to Truth, or whether it be only Diſproportionate to it, either way it follows that it cannot be the Meaſure of it, which I cannot but now look upon as a Propoſition ſufficiently demonſtrated. And in all this I contend for no more than what is implied in that Common and univerſally approv'd Maxim even among thoſe of the *Rational way*, that we ought not to deny what is Evident for the ſake of what is Obſcure, or depart from a Truth which we ſee a Neceſſity to admit becauſe of ſome Difficulties attending it which we cannot ſolve; which they ſay is an Argument only of our Ignorance, and not of the Falſhood of the thing. This indeed is a true Rule, and ſuch as muſt be allow'd to hold good in all our Reaſonings, let the Matter of them be what it will. Only I wiſh that the Implication of the Rule were as much minded, as the Rule it ſelf is generally receiv'd. For it plainly implies that there are ſome things which though plain and certain as to their *Exiſtence*, are yet incomprehenſible

prehenſible and inexplicable as to their *Manner*. But then as the Incomprehenſibility of the Manner ſhould not make us reject the Truth of the thing when otherwiſe Evident, ſo neither ſhould the Evidence we have of the Truth of the thing make us diſown the Incomprehenſibility of the Manner, ſince it is ſo far from being againſt the Nature of Truth that it ſhould be incomprehenſible, that you ſee we have diſcover'd even from the Contemplation of its Nature that there are incomprehenſible Truths. Of which I might now ſubjoyn ſome particular Examples, but that I ſhould fall very deep into a *Common Place*, being herein prevented by many other Writers, particularly by the admirable one of *L'Art de Penſer*, to the Firſt Chapter of whoſe Fourth Book I refer my Reader; where he ſhews by ſeveral, and ſome of them uncommon Inſtances that there are things which the Mind of Man is not capable of Comprehending. After which he Concludes with a very grave and uſeful Reflection, which for the great advantage and Perti-

nency of it to the preſent Affair, though I refer my Reader to the reſt of the Chapter, I ſhall here ſet down. *The Profit* (ſays he) *that one may draw from theſe Speculations is not barely to acquire the knowledge of them, which of it ſelf is barren enough, but it is to learn to know the Bounds of our underſtanding, and to force it to confeſs that there are things which it cannot Comprehend. And therefore it is good to fatigue the mind with theſe kind of Subtilties, the better to tame its Preſumption, and abate its confidence and daringneſs in oppoſing its Feeble Lights againſt the Myſteries of Religion, under the Pretence that it cannot comprehend them. For ſince all the Force of Human Underſtanding is conſtrain'd to yield to the leaſt Atom of Matter, and to own that it ſees Clearly that it is infinitely diviſible without being able to Comprehend how this may be. Is it not apparently to tranſgreſs againſt Reaſon to refuſe to believe the wonderful effects of the Divine Omnipotence, Merely for this Reaſon, that our Underſtanding cannot Comprehend them?* Yes without doubt

doubt it is, as will better appear in the ſequel of this Diſcourſe. In the mean while before I take leave of the Subject of this Chapter, I have a double Remarque to make upon it.

34. The Firſt is, that ſince Truth in its full extent is Incomprehenſible, we ſhould not vainly go about to Comprehend it, but be contented to be ignorant in many things. And ſince there are ſome ſpecial Truths in particular that are incomprehenſible we ſhould not apply our Thoughts to the Comprehenſion of all things at a Venture, as ſome who are for underſtanding every thing, but ſit down firſt and Conſider whether they are proportionate to our Capacities or No, and, as far as we can learn to diſtinguiſh what Truths may, and what may not be Comprehended by us, that ſo we may not loſe that Time and Pains in the Contemplation of them, which might be profitably imploy'd in the Conſideration of other things, better ſuted to our

Capacity. As a great many do, who buſie themſelves all their Lives long about ſuch things which if they ſhould ſtudy to Eternity they would not Comprehend, and that indeed becauſe they require an Infinite Capacity to Comprehend them. Whereas the ſhorteſt Compendium of Study, and the beſt way to abridge the Sciences is to ſtudy only what we can Maſter, and what is within the Sphere of our Faculties, and never ſo much as to apply our ſelves to what we can never Comprehend.

35. The other Remarque is that the Concluſion prov'd in this Chapter does very much Fortifie and Confirm that which was undertaken to be made out in the laſt Concerning the Diſtinction of Things Above, and Things Contrary to Reaſon. For if there are Truths which we cannot Comprehend, then it ſeems what is above our Comprehenſion may yet be True, and if True then to be ſure not Contrary to Reaſon, ſince

ſince whatever is Contrary to Reaſon is no leſs Contrary to Truth, which though ſometimes above Reaſon is yet never Contrary to it.

CHAP. V.

That therefore a things being Incomprehenſible by Reaſon is of it ſelf no Concluding Argument of its not being True.

1. AS there is nothing *in* Man that deſerves his Conſideration ſo *Much*, and Few things *without* him that deſerve it *More* than that part of him wherein he reſembles his Maker, ſo there is Nothing more worthy of his Conſideration in that part, or that is at leaſt more neceſſary to be Conſider'd by him, than the *Defects* of it, without a due regard to which it would not be very ſafe for him to dwell much upon the Conſideration of the other, as being apt to ſeduce him into Pride and Vanity, to blow him up with Self-Conceit, and

and ſo by an imaginary Greatneſs to ſpoil and corrupt that which is Genuine and Natural.

2. Now the Defects of our Intellectual part Conſider'd in their general Heads are I ſuppoſe *Sin*, *Ignorance*, and *Errour*. And though Sin in it ſelf muſt be allow'd to be of a worſe Nature and Conſequence than either Ignorance or Errour (however ſome may fancy it a greater Reproach to 'em to have their Intellectuals queſtion'd than their Morals) and ſo upon that ſcore may require more of our Conſideration, yet upon another account the Defects of the Underſtanding ſeem to need it more than thoſe of the Will, ſince we are not only apt to be more proud of our Intellectuals than of our Morals, but alſo to Conceit our ſelves more Free and Secure from Errour than we are from Sin, though Sin in the very Nature and Principle of it implies and ſuppoſes Errour.

3. Pride the preſumed Sin of the Angels is alſo the moſt Natural and Hereditary one of Man, his dominant

and moſt cleaving Corruption, the Vice as I may call it of his Planet and Complexion. And that which we are moſt apt to be proud of is our *Underſtandings*, the only Faculty in us whoſe limits we forget. In other things we are Senſible not only of the general Bounds of our Nature, but alſo of the particular narrowneſs of them, and accordingly do not attempt any thing very much beyond our Meaſure, but contain our Selves pretty reaſonably within Our Line, at leaſt are not ſuch Fools as to apply our Strength to Move the Earth out of its place, or to ſet our Mouths to drink up the Sea, or to try with our Eyes to look into the Regions beyond the Stars. But there is hardly any Diſtance but to which we fancy our Intellectual Sight will reach, ſcarce any Object too bright, too large, or too far remov'd for it. Strange that when we Conſider that in us which makes us Men, we ſhould forget that we are ſo. And yet thus it is; when we look upon our Underſtandings 'tis with ſuch a Magnifying Glaſs that it appears in a manner bound-

leſs

leſs and unlimited to us, and we are dazzled with our own Light.

4. Not that it is to be preſumed that there are any who upon a deliberate Conſideration of the Matter have this Form'd and expreſs Thought that their Underſtandings are *Infinite*. Human Nature ſeems hardly capable of ſuch Exceſs. But only as the Pſalmiſt ſays in another Caſe of ſome Worldly Men, that their *Inward Thought is that their houſes ſhall continue for ever*, Not meaning that any could be ſo groſſely abſurd as poſitively and explicitly to Conceive that their Houſes any more than their own Bodies, ſhould laſt always, and never decay, but only that they had ſuch a kind of a wandring and Confuſe Imagination ſecretly lurking in their Minds, and looſely hovering about them; ſo in like manner there are a ſort of People who are Parturient and teeming with a kind of Confuſe and unform'd Imagination tho' perhaps they never bring it to an expreſs and diſtinct Thought, that their Underſtandings have no bounds or limits belonging to them, tho' they cannot deny *Pſal.* 4

deny but that they have, if directly put to the Queſtion.

5. Accordingly you ſhall find thoſe whoſe Conduct betrays this *inward* Sentiment, who venture at all in their Studies, ſtick at nothing, but will undertake to give a Reaſon for every thing, and poſitively decide whatever Comes in their way without Suſpenſe or Reſerve, imagining (confuſely at leaſt) they have a Comprehenſion of all things, and that there is nothing too hard or knotty for them, nothing but what they either actually do, or are capable of Comprehending, if they once ſet themſelves to it. And from hence they roundly Conclude that whatever they are not able to Comprehend is not true, and accordingly deny their Belief to whatever tranſcends their Comprehenſion.

6. Now I confeſs there is no fault to be found with the Conſequence of theſe Men, nor with their Practice as it relates to that Conſequence, which are both (as far as I can ſee) exceeding right if their Principle be once admitted: For if indeed it be really ſo that Human Reaſon

Reaſon is adequate and Commenſurate to Truth, ſo that there is no Truth but what it is able to Comprehend, then it will certainly follow that whatever it cannot Comprehend is not True, and there will need no other, nor better Argument of the falſhood of any thing than the Incomprehenſibility of it. For their Reaſoning reſolves into this Form.

Whatever is true we can Comprehend.
This we do not Comprehend,
Therefore this is not true.

Or thus,

If whatever is true we can Comprehend, then what we cannot Comprehend is not true,
But whatever is true we can Comprehend, Ergo *&c.*

Where 'tis plain that if the Major of the Firſt, or the Minor of the Second Syllogiſm (wherein the Principle of theſe Men is Contain'd) be allow'd, there will be no avoiding the

the Concluſions of them. So that if we admit that Human Reaſon is Comprehenſive of all Truth we are not Conſiſtent with our Selves if we do not alſo grant that the Incomprehenſibility of a thing is a juſt Warrant to Conclude it not True.

7. But then on the other ſide if this Mighty Principle upon which ſuch a Weight is laid, and ſuch great things built be falſe, if Human Reaſon be not the Meaſure of Truth (as I think is with great Evidence Demonſtrated in the laſt Chapter) then is not the Conſequence as good this way, that therefore a thing's being Incomprehenſible by Reaſon is no Concluding Argument of it's not being True? For how are we inconſiſtent with our Selves, if granting Human Reaſon to be Commenſurate to Truth we deny that the Incomprehenſibility of a thing argues it not to be True, but only becauſe in denying that we Contradict our Principle; or, which is all one, Suppoſe the Contradictory Propoſition to it to be true, *viz.* that Human Reaſon is *not* Commenſurate to Truth. But now if in ſaying that the

the Incomprehenſibility of a thing does not argue it not to be true we in the Conſequence of what we affirm Suppoſe that Human Reaſon is not the Meaſure of Truth, then 'tis as plain that the Suppoſition of Reaſon's not being the Meaſure of Truth will alſo Oblige us to ſay that the Incomprehenſibility of a thing is no Argument of it's not being True. Whereby it is plain that the Conſequence is every whit as good thus, *Human Reaſon is not the Meaſure of Truth, therefore the Incomprehenſibility of a thing is no Argument that it is not True; as thus, Human Reaſon is the Meaſure of Truth, therefore the Incomprehenſibility of a thing is an Argument that it is not True.* The only Reaſon why he that denies this latter Conſequence upon the Suppoſition or Conceſſion of this latter Principle is inconſiſtent with himſelf, being this, becauſe in denying the latter Conſequence he Suppoſes the Former Principle, which Principle therefore muſt as much infer the Conſequence that Suppoſed it, *viz.* That a things being Incomprehenſible by Reaſon is

is no Warrant to Conclude that it is not true.

8. And becauſe this Principle that Human Reaſon is not the Meaſure of Truth has been already proved at large, I look upon the grounds of this Conſequence as already laid, and therefore to ſhew the Connexion that is between the one and the other (beſides what I have even now ſaid to that purpoſe) need only add this further Remarque. That ſince Human Reaſon is not the Meaſure of Truth, or ſince there are Incomprehenſible Truths, then it ſeems the Incomprehenſibility of a thing and the Truth of a thing may Conſiſt together; or in other words, the ſame thing may be at once *True* and *Incomprehenſible*. But now there cannot be in the whole Compaſs of Reaſoning a more certain, or more evident Maxim than this, That that which is when a thing is, or would be ſuppoſing it were, is no Argument that it is not. As for Inſtance, Suppoſe it ſhould be Objected againſt the *Copernican* Hypotheſis of the Motion of the Earth that it is repugnant to Senſe,

Senſe, ſince we ſee the Sun and the Stars Riſe and Set, and Move round about us. It is thought a ſufficient Anſwer to this to ſay, That ſuppoſing the Earth and not the Sun did really Move theſe Appearances would yet be the ſame as they are now, ſince Sailing, as we do, between the Sun and the Stars (as a late Writer expreſſes it) not the Ship in which we are, but the Bodies which ſurround us would ſeem to Move. And 'tis moſt Certain that if ſuppoſing the Earth did really Move the Motion would yet ſeem to be in the Sun and Stars; then the ſeeming Motion of thoſe Bodies is no Argument that the Earth does not Move.

Le Clerks Phyſics. Pag. 14.

9. Why juſt ſo it is in the preſent Caſe, when 'tis Objected againſt the Truth of a thing that 'tis Incomprehenſible by Human Reaſon, 'tis a ſufficient Anſwer to ſay that this argues nothing, ſince if the thing were true it might yet be Incomprehenſible. And 'tis moſt certain that if ſuppoſing a thing to be True it might yet be Incomprehenſible, then the Incomprehenſibility of a things

thing is no good Objection againſt the Truth of it. And therefore ſince we have proved that there are Incomprehenſible Truths, and Conſequently that the Truth of a thing and the Incomprehenſibility of the ſame thing may Conſiſt together, we may now with all Rational aſſurance Conclude that the Incomprehenſibility of a thing is no Argument that it is not True, any more than the ſeeming Motion of the Sun is an Argument againſt the real one of the Earth, ſince the Former would be even Suppoſing the Truth of the Latter. And both by Vertue of this moſt Evident and inconteſtable Principle, That what may Conſiſt with the Truth of any thing, can be no good Argument that it is not True.

10. And indeed when it ſhall be Conſider'd how many things ſurpaſs our Conception when we are Children which yet we are able well to Comprehend when we are Men, how many things again are beyond the Ken of Ignorant and Illiterate Men which yet are very Intelligible and Shine forth with full Light

Light to the Men of Art and Learning, and how many things again even among the Learned are now diſcover'd and well underſtood by the help of *Algebra* which were *Myſteries* to former Ages, and are ſtill beyond even the Imagination of thoſe who have not that Noble and Wonderful *Key of Knowledge*. When again it ſhall be further Conſider'd how many of thoſe things which we cannot even with the Aſſiſtance of that Commanding Key unlock in this ſtate of Mortality, we may yet have a clear view of in that of Separation, when deliver'd from the Burthen of our Fleſh, and that many of thoſe things which are too high for us then may yet be of a level with the Underſtanding of Angels, and that what is above their Capacity may yet be moſt clearly and diſtinctly perceiv'd by the Infinitely penetrating and All-Comprehenſive Intellect of God, I ſay he that ſhall but ſeriouſly enter into this ſingle Reflection muſt needs diſcover himſelf much wanting in that Stock of Senſe and Reaſon he

pretends to, if he ſtill continue to Meaſure the Poſſibilities of things by their Proportionableneſs to his Underſtanding, or Conclude any thing Falſe or Impoſſible, when he has no better Reaſon for it but only becauſe he cannot Comprehend it.

CHAP.

CHAP. VI.

That if the Incomprehenſibility of a thing were an Argument of its not being true, Human Reaſon would then be the Meaſure of Truth.

1. AS there is Nothing more Common than for people to hold Certain Principles that have an inſeparable Connexion with very bad Conſequences, and yet not profeſſedly to hold thoſe Conſequences, becauſe either they do not attend to them, or are not ſenſible that they do indeed follow from ſuch Principles, whereof we have two very pregnant Inſtances in the Maintainers of the *Predeſtinarian* and *Solifidian* Syſtemes, ſo on the other hand, and for the ſame Reaſon there are thoſe who take up, and with great Fixedneſs adhere to certain Conſequences without Pro-

feſſedly holding thoſe Principles from which they truly flow, and to which (if traced to the Head) they will infallibly lead them.

2. Of this we have a very particular Inſtance (where I confeſs one would not expect to find it) in thoſe of the *Socinian* Perſwaſion. The Reaſon theſe Men of Reaſon give why they will not believe the Myſteries of the Chriſtian Faith, is becauſe they are above their Reaſon, they cannot Comprehend them. Whereby they plainly imply, that they will believe Nothing but what they can Comprehend, or that Nothing is to be believ'd that is Incomprehenſible, which is alſo a common Maxim among them, who accordingly make Above Reaſon and Contrary to Reaſon to be one and the ſame thing. And whereas 'tis only the untruth of a thing that can make it unfit to be the Object of Faith, in ſaying they will not believe what they cannot Comprehend, they do as good as ſay that what they cannot Comprehend is not True, and ſo that the Incomprehenſibility of a thing is a juſt warrant

warrant to conclude it Falſe. And all this they own and expreſly declare, if not in theſe very terms, yet at leaſt in ſuch as are equivalent to them as is too Notorious and well known to need any Citations for the proof of it. But now though they do thus profeſſedly own that the Incomprehenſibility of a thing by Reaſon is an Argument of its not being true, yet that Human Reaſon is the Meaſure of Truth, or that all Truth is Comprehenſible by it, are (as I take it) Propoſitions which they do not openly and profeſſedly avow. For as I noted in the Introduction 'tis ſuch an Odious and Arrogant Aſſertion that they cannot with any Face of Modeſty or common Decency make a plain and direct Profeſſion of it, though at the ſame time 'tis moſt Certain, that this is the true Principle of that Conſequence which they do profeſſedly hold, viz. *that the Incomprehenſibility of a thing argues it not to be true*, and that this Conſequence does as neceſſarily lead back to that Principle.

3. For as if Human Reaſon be the Meaſure of Truth it follows in the deſcending line as a direct Conſequence that the Incomprehenſibility of a thing argues it not to be true, ſo it follows as well Backwards *& per viam aſcensûs*, that if the Incomprehenſibility of a thing argues it not to be True, then Human Reaſon is the Meaſure of Truth. Since if it were not, the Incomprehenſibility of a thing (as is ſhewn in the Preceding Chapter) would then not argue it not to be True. If therefore it does, 'tis plain that Human Reaſon is the Meaſure of Truth. Which Principle whoever diſowns ought alſo to renounce the other Propoſition, viz. *That the Incomprehenſibility of a thing is an Argument of its untruth*, which if yet he will imbrace notwithſtanding, 'tis plain he holds the Conſequence without its Principle, and has indeed no Reaſon for what he Affirms.

4. For as he who granting Human Reaſon to be the Meaſure of Truth, denies yet that the Incomprehenſibility of a thing is an Argument of its

its not being true is therefore inconſiſtent with himſelf, becauſe in ſo doing he ſuppoſes the Contradictory to what he had before granted, *viz.* that Human Reaſon is not the Meaſure of Truth. So he that Affirms that the Incomprehenſibility of a thing *is* an Argument of its not being True, and yet denies that Human Reaſon is the Meaſure of Truth, is alſo as inconſiſtent with himſelf, becauſe in ſo doing he ſuppoſes the Contradictory to his own Aſſertion, and does in effect ſay that the Incomprehenſibility of a thing is not an Argument of its not being True, as moſt Certainly it would not be in caſe Human Reaſon be not the Meaſure of Truth, as the foregoing Chapter has ſufficiently ſhewn. The ſhort is, if the Not being of *A* proves that *C* is not, then the being of *C* proves that *A* is, ſince if it were not, according to the Firſt Suppoſition *C* could not be. And ſo here if Reaſon's not being the Meaſure of Truth proves that the Incomprehenſibility of a thing is not an Argument of its not being True,

then if the Incomprehenſibility of a thing be an Argument of it's not being True 'tis plain that Reaſon is the Meaſure of Truth, ſince if it were not then according to the firſt Suppoſition the Incomprehenſibility of a thing would not be an Argument of its not being True.

5. For how I pray comes the Incomprehenſibility of a thing to conclude the untruth of it? I cannot Comprehend ſuch a thing, therefore it is not True, where's the Conſequence? By what Logic does this Latter Propoſition follow from the Former? why we have here the Minor Propoſition and the Concluſion, and to make a Complete Argument of it we muſt add another, thus; If it were true I ſhould Comprehend it, but I do not Comprehend it, therefore it is not true. Whereby it appears to the eye that my not being able to Comprehend a thing is no otherwiſe an Argument of the untruth of it, than as it is firſt preſuppoſed that if it were true I ſhould be able to Comprehend it. Which again reſolving into this Abſolute Propoſition, that I am able to Comprehend

prehend all Truth, it plainly follows that if my inability to Comprehend a thing be an Argument that it is not true, then I am able to Comprehend all Truth, and that my Reaſon is the Meaſure and Final Standard of it.

6. I Conclude therefore that if the Incomprehenſibility of a thing were an Argument of it's not being true then Human Reaſon will be the Meaſure of Truth, and that they that hold the Former ought alſo if they will be Conſiſtent with themſelves to admit the Latter. But becauſe this is a Falſe Principle, that Human Reaſon is the Meaſure of Truth, therefore, I Conclude again that the Conſequence that Reſolves into this Principle is alſo Falſe, ſince we may as well Conclude a Conſequence to be Falſe becauſe it leads back to a Falſe Principle, as a Principle to be Falſe becauſe it is productive of a bad Conſequence. Which ſtill further Confirms and Eſtabliſhes the Concluſion of the laſt Chapter, *viz. That the Incomprehenſibility of a thing is no Argument of its untruth*, which you ſee

ſee is now proved both Backwards and Forwards, and ſo made impregnable on all ſides. We have proved it Forwards by ſhewing the Falſeneſs of that Principle that Human Reaſon is the Meaſure of Truth, and by thence arguing the ſaid Concluſion; and we have alſo proved it Backwards by ſhewing that the Contrary Suppoſition Reſolves into that Falſe and already Confuſed Principle. And I do not ſee how any Concluſion can be better proved.

CHAP.

CHAP. VII.

That therefore the Incomprehenſibility of a thing is no juſt Objection againſt the Belief of it. With an Account of the Carteſian *Maxim, that we are to Aſſent only to what is Clear and Evident.*

1. IT is a Wonderful thing to Conſider the *Caprice* of Human Nature, by what unaccountable Springs it's Movements are ordered, and how odly and unſteddily Men act and manage themſelves even in the ſame Circumſtances, and in Relation to the ſame Objects. Sometimes the Obſcurity and Myſterioufneſs of a thing ſhall be a Motive of Credibility, and recommend it the rather to their Belief. Thus you ſhall have a great many reject that Philoſophy as idle and Chimerical which undertakes to explain the Effects of Nature by inſenſible Par-

Particles, their different Bigneſs, Figure, Contexture, Local Motion, Reſt, &c. Merely becauſe this is a plain Simple and Intelligible Account, ſuch as they can eaſily and well Conceive. The very eaſineſs and clearneſs wherewith they Conceive theſe Principles is Made an Objection againſt them (though indeed it be a good Preſumption for them) and for that very Reaſon they will not believe them to be the true Principles of Nature, whoſe Effects they fancy muſt be Reſolved into Cauſes more hidden and Abſtruſe. And accordingly they find in themſelves a greater inclination to lend attention to thoſe that ſhall undertake the Solution of them by the real Chimeras of Subſtantial Forms, Qualities, Sympathys, Antipathys, &c. or that ſhall go to account for them by the yet more Obſcure Principles of the Chymiſts, ſtriking and filling their Ears with thoſe great but empty Sounds, *Archeus*, *Seminal Spirit*, *Aſtral Beings*, *Gas*, *Blas*, &c. which they receive with great ſatisfaction not for their Scientific Light (for they are dark as may be, mere Philoſophic Cant)

Cant) but only becauſe they are Myſterious and Abſtruſe, and therefore they fancy there muſt be ſomewhat more than Ordinary in them, tho they know not, nor, it may be, never Conſider'd, what. And herein, as in ſome other Inſtances, *Men love Darkneſs better than Light.*

2. But then at another time you ſhall have them inquiring after Truth as *Diogenes* did after an Honeſt Man, with a Candle in their hands, and not caring to go a ſtep any further than they can ſee their way. Now upon a ſudden they are all for Clear and diſtinct Ideas, Full and adequate Perceptions, Demonſtrative Proofs and Arguments, and nothing will ſerve or Content them but Light and Evidence, and they will believe nothing but what they can Comprehend. Strange diverſity of Conduct! Who would think two ſuch vaſtly diſtant extreams ſhould meet together, I will not ſay in the ſame Man, but in the ſame Human Nature, and that the very ſame Creature (and ſuch a One as Stiles it Self Rational too) ſhould proceed by ſuch uncertain Meaſures, and

and act ſo inconſiſtently with it Sélf; ſometimes embracing a thing for the ſake of it's Obſcurity, and ſometimes again in another Fit making that alone an Invincible Objection againſt the Belief of it.

3. But it is plain by the foregoing Meaſures that it is not. For ſince Truth is the general Object of Faith, 'tis evident that nothing can argue a thing to be abſolutely incredible, or not reaſonable to be beleiv'd, but that which at the ſame time argues it not to be True. For if true, then 'tis ſtill within the Compaſs of the general Object of Faith. But now we have ſhewn already that the Incomprehenſibility of a thing is no Argument of it's not being true, whence it clearly and cloſely follows that 'tis no Argument neither againſt it's Credibility. And if ſo, then we may believe it Notwithſtanding it's Incomprehenſibility, becauſe we may believe whatever is not Abſolutely incredible. So that there is no Neceſſity that we ſhould diſcard every thing we cannot Conceive as unworthy of a Rational Belief, or that what is Above

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our Reaſon ſhould be therefore above our Faith too.

4. It is true indeed that the Incomprehenſibility of a thing is in it Self no proper and direct Argument why it ſhould be believ'd, and he would be thought to give but an ordinary account of his Faith, who being ask'd why he believ'd ſuch an Incomprehenſible thing, ſhould anſwer *becauſe it is Incomprehenſible*. which at beſt could paſs only for a Religious Flouriſh, much ſuch another as, *Credo quia impoſſibile*. And that becauſe the Incomprehenſibility of a thing is not directly and *per ſe* a Criterion of Truth (whether it may be *per Accidens*, may be Conſider'd afterwards) whoſe Natural and genuin Character is not Obſcurity, but Light and Evidence. Not that nothing is True but what has this Character (for we have already ſhewn the Contrary in proving Incomprehenſible Truths) but that as whatever we clearly perceive is True, ſo our Clear perceiving of a thing is the only ſign from the Intrinſic Nature of the thing it Self of the Truth of it. Incomprehenſibility

bility therefore is none, but as ſuch abſtracts from true and not true, and is equally Common to both. But now that which may Conſiſt with a thing ſuppoſing it falſe, can no more prove it True, than that which may Conſiſt with a thing ſuppoſing it True, can prove it falſe, according to the Tenour of the Fifth Chapter. The Incomprehenſibility therefore of a thing is no proper Argument of the Truth of it, and Conſequently no Reaſon of it Self, why it ſhould be believ'd, and that becauſe it abſtracts as ſuch from True and Falſe, and is too Common to Both to prove either.

5. And becauſe it is ſo, it is alſo further granted that the Incomprehenſibility of a thing is not only in it Self no proper Reaſon why it ſhould be believ'd, but has alſo ſo far the Nature of a *Diſſwaſive* from believing, as to be a Caution againſt a too haſty Belief, till there appear ſome other Motive from without either from Reaſon or Authority that ſhall determin the Aſſent. In the mean while it adviſes to *Suſpend*. For the Incom-

Incomprehenſibility of a thing being as ſuch No Reaſon why a Man ſhould believe it, 'tis plain that if he did believe it Conſider'd only as in that State he would believe it without Reaſon. That therefore is a Reaſon why he ſhould ſuſpend, a Negation of Reaſon being enough to with-hold ones Aſſent, though to give it one had need have a poſitive Reaſon. When therefore a thing appears Incomprehenſible, that indeed is ſufficient Reaſon to ſuſpend our Belief, till ſome prevailing Conſideration from without ſhall overrule that Suſpenſion, by requiring our Aſſent. But when it does ſo, then the Incomprehenſibility ought to be No Argument to the Contrary, and it would be every whit as abſurd to reject a thing now becauſe of its Incomprehenſibility, as to believe it before for that Reaſon. And that becauſe as the Incomprehenſibility of a thing is no reaſon for Believing it, ſo it is no Abſolute Reaſon againſt it.

6. If it were ſo it would be in *Natural* things, the Objects of Human and Philoſophic Science, ſuch as

belong properly and immediately to the Province and Juriſdiction of Reaſon. Here, if any where, the Incomprehenſibility of a thing would forbid all Aſſent to it. And ſo it is ſuppoſed to do by ſome who though far from denying the Belief of Incomprehenſible things in *Religion*, will yet tell you that in *Phyſical* Contemplations, Clearneſs and Evidence is to lead the way, and we are to proceed with our Light before us, aſſenting to nothing but what we well Comprehend. In Matters of Faith indeed they will allow that Reaſon is to be ſubmitted to Revelation, and that we are to believe many things which paſs our Comprehenſion; but in Matters of pure Reaſon they will have us go no further than Reaſon can carry us. Which indeed is right enough if their Meaning be that we are to Aſſent to Nothing but what upon the whole Matter all things Conſider'd from without as well as from within, we have reaſon to believe true, and that we are never to proceed to judge or determin without ſome Evidence or other, but then this will equally hold

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in Matters of Faith too, which is too rational an Aſſent to be given at a Venture, and we know not why, and whoſe *Formal Reaſon* (as has been already diſcours'd) is always Clear. But if their Meaning be that in Matters of Reaſon we muſt Aſſent to nothing but what has an internal Evidence, and what in its ſelf, and by its own Light is Comprehenſible by us (as they ſeem to mean, or elſe their diſtinction of the Caſe of Reaſon and the Caſe of Revelation is here impertinent) then I conceive that they ſet too narrow limits to our Aſſent in Matters of Reaſon when they allow it to be given only to things which in this ſenſe are Evident to us. For 'tis plain that there are many things in Nature which we ſee are True, and muſt be True, and ſo not only may, but cannot help Aſſenting to them, though at the ſame time we are not able to Comprehend how they are, or can poſſibly be.

7. Not that our Aſſent is then *Blind* and wholly without Evidence, (for then we might as well Aſſent to the contrary as to what we do, and

would do better not to Assent at all) but only that it has none from *within*, and from the intrinsic Nature of the Object, but only from some External Consideration, much after the same manner as it is in *Faith*. In both which there may be a Clear Reason, why we should Assent to an Obscure thing. But then as the internal Obscurity does not destroy the External Evidence, so neither does the External Evidence strike any Light into the internal Obscurity; or in other words, as the Reason for Assenting is never the less Clear because the Matter assented to is Obscure, so neither is the Matter assented to ever the less Obscure because the Reason for assenting to it is Clear. And yet notwithstanding this internal Obscurity of the Matter we assent to it because of the prevailing Light of the External Evidence. And this we do, not only in Matters of Faith (according to the Restriction of some) but in the things of Nature and Reason too, where we are oftentimes forced by the pressing urgency of certain External and Collateral Considerations

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to aſſent to things internally obſcure and whoſe very poſſibility we cannot Comprehend, as is plain in the great Queſtion of the *Diviſibility* of *Quantity*, and other Inſtances, whereof every Thinking Man's Obſervation cannot but have already furniſh'd him with variety. The Incomprehenſibility then of a thing is no juſt Objection againſt our Aſſent to it even in Matters of a *Rational* Nature, much leſs then is it in Matters of *Faith* For if not in Matters that belong to the Court of Reaſon, and where ſhe ſits as Judge, then much leſs in things that are not of her proper Juriſdiction, and if notwithſtanding the internal inevidence of an Object we think fit to aſſent to it upon *Rational* Conſiderations, much more may we, and ought we upon the *Authority* of the Infallible God.

8. Indeed if whatſoever is Above our Reaſon were alſo (as ſome pretend) as Contrary to it, and there were nothing true but what was alſo Comprehenſible, and ſo the Incomprehenſibility of a thing were an Argument of its not being true,

then I confeſs we could not as Rational Creatures aſſent to an incomprehenſible Propoſition upon any Conſideration whatſoever, No not even that of Divine Authority. 'Tis true indeed there could then be no ſuch Authority for Incomprehenſible things. But if there were, 'tis impoſſible we ſhould regard it, becauſe we could not have greater aſſurance either of the Exiſtence or of the Truth of it, than we have already (upon this Suppoſition) that the things reveal'd are not true. But now if this Suppoſition be no more than a Suppoſition, if to be above Reaſon does not involve any Contrariety to it, if there are incomprehenſible Truths, and Conſequently the Incomprehenſibility of a thing is no Argument of its not being true (all which has been already proved) then 'tis plain that what is an incomprehenſible may yet be a Believable Object (becauſe within the Poſſibility of Truth) and then to render it actually believ'd there needs only ſome External Evidence either from Reaſon or Authority. For what ſhould hinder our Aſſent to an

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Incomprehenſible thing when we have plain Evidence from without for it, and its own internal Obſcurity is no Argument againſt it! 'Tis plain therefore that we ought to give our Aſſent. And ſince we do ſo oftentimes upon a Ground of Reaſon, much more ought we upon that more Firm and Immoveable ground of Revelation. The ſhort is, whatever is no Objection againſt the Truth of a thing is none againſt the Credibility of it, ſince Truth is the General Object of Faith (unleſs you will ſay that a thing is unfit to be believ'd upon any other account beſides want of Truth) and therefore ſince we have already ſhewn that the Incomprehenſibility of a thing is no Argument againſt the Truth of it, it viſibly follows that it is no Argument againſt the Belief of it neither. Therefore an Incomprehenſible thing may be believ'd, and accordingly he that refuſes to believe any thing is bound to give a better Reaſon for it than becauſe it is *Incomprehenſible.*

9. If it be ſaid that this is reaſon enough, becauſe Faith is a Rational Act, and therefore what is above the Comprehenſion of Reaſon is as much above a Rational Belief, to this, beſides what I have already remarqu'd upon this Occaſion in the Chapter of Faith, I here further reply, that it is true indeed and on both ſides agreed that Faith is a Rational Act, but in what Senſe is the Queſtion. There are two very different Senſes according to which it may be ſaid to be ſo either in regard of the Clearneſs of its Formal Reaſon, or in regard of the Clearneſs of its Object. Either becauſe it is founded upon an External Evidence, or Argument for believing, or becauſe it proceeds upon an Internal Evidence, that appears in the very Nature of the thing Believ'd. If Faith be ſaid to be a Rational Act in the latter Senſe, the Aſſertion is then Falſe, for ſo (that is in reſpect of the Object) we have ſhewn it to be an inevident Aſſent. But if it be ſaid to be a Rational Act in the former Senſe, then indeed it is true, but nothing to the purpoſe, ſince

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ſince nothing hinders but that this External Evidence may well conſiſt with an Internal Inevidence, or in other words, that the Clearneſs of the Reaſon for Believing may ſtand with the Obſcurity of the Object Believ'd. And therefore though Faith be a Rational Act yet it does not hence follow that what is Above Reaſon is alſo above Faith and cannot rationally be believ'd, becauſe the Act of Faith is ſaid to be Rational, Not in reſpect of the Evidence of the Object, but only that of its Formal Reaſon or Motive. And therefore though there be no Evidence in the Object, yet it is not thereby render'd uncapable of being the Matter of Faith, becauſe the Evidence which Faith as a Rational Act ſuppoſes, is wholly of another kind. There ſeems indeed a kind of oppoſition as to the Sound between Faith's being an Act of Reaſon, and the believing what is Above Reaſon. And this it may be is that which impoſes upon the Minds, or the Ears ſhall I ſay, of them that urge it as an Objection. I cannot imagine what elſe ſhould, for I'm ſure there is no Con-

Contradiction in the Senſe. 'Tis true indeed Evidence in the Act and not Evidence in the Act are Contradictories, becauſe *ad Idem*, and ſo are Not Evidence in the Object and Evidence in the Object, for the ſame reaſon. But there is no Contradiction between Evidence in the Act and No Evidence in the Object, and therefore theſe may ſtand together, though the other cannot

10. But to lay open the Fallacy of this great and very popular Objection yet a little more to the Eye (though it muſt be a very blind one that does not ſee it already) I will put it into Form, and give it a Formal Anſwer.

If Faith be a Rational Act, then what is Above Reaſon cannot rationally be Believ'd.
But Faith is a Rational Act, Ergo.

For Anſwer to this I diſtinguiſh. If by Rational Act be meant an Act founded upon Internal Evidence, or the Evidence of the Object, then I deny the Minor, Faith is not ſo a Rational Act. But if by Rational

Act

Act be meant an Act founded upon External Evidence or the Evidence of its Formal Reaſon or Motive, then indeed I grant the Minor, but deny the Conſequence, which is none at all, for it does not at all follow becauſe Faith is a Rational Act, meaning by it that it proceeds upon External Evidence, and that there is a clear Reaſon for Believing, that therefore the thing Believ'd may not from within and in its own Nature be altogether inevident and ſo above the Comprehenſion of Reaſon. For though Evidence be Contradictory to Not Evidence in the ſame, yet Evidence in the Act is no way Contradictory to inevidence in the Object, and Conſequently does not at all exclude it. They may therefore both ſtand together, and Conſequently what is above Reaſon may be believ'd for any thing that this Celebrated Objection from Faith's being a Rational Act makes to the Contrary; which truly is ſo groſs and palpable a Sophiſm, that I cannot but wonder how it could ever impoſe upon ſo many Learned Men as it has done, and ſome of them

them very acute and nice Conſiderers of things. But I hope the Fallaciouſneſs of it is by this ſo plainly and fully detected, that I ſhall not think thoſe Heads worth much informing that ſhall be further impoſed on by it.

11. But what then ſhall we ſay to that Great and Fundamental Maxim ſo preſſingly inculcated by *Des Cartes* and his Followers, and not diſallow'd of by others, that *we are to aſſent to nothing but what is Clear and Evident*? If to nothing but what is Clear and Evident, how then to what is Obſcure and Inevident? Or if to what is Obſcure and Inevident, how then to nothing but what is Clear and Evident? Do not theſe ſeem flat Contradictions one to the other, and how then ſhall we adjuſt the Matter between them? It muſt be either by denying that *Carteſian* Maxim to be true, or by ſhewing that though it be true it does not Contradict the Aſſertion here maintain'd, but is Conſiſtent with it. The Firſt way I ſhall not take. I allow the Maxim to be true, and not only ſo, but to be withal of the greateſt

greateſt importance of any that can be given for the direction of the Mind of Man in order to the avoiding of Errour. The only Remedy and Caution againſt which is never to let our Judgments prevent our Conceptions, or to Aſſent to any thing that we have only a Confuſe Notion of, and where we ſee only by halves and with an imperfect Light, or perhaps do not ſee at all, but to have a Clear Underſtanding of the Matter before we adventure to judge of it, and to Maintain an Evidence in all our Reaſonings. Which accordingly is made by M. *Malebranche* the Firſt of thoſe Rules which in his Treatiſe of Method he lays down to be obſerv'd in the inquiry after Truth. And indeed to do otherwiſe is to make a wrong uſe of our Intellectual Powers, particularly of that *Liberty* we have to ſuſpend Judgment till the fulneſs of Evidence requires it, and the want of Obſerving this Rule is alſo the Occaſion of moſt of our Errours and Wrong Aſſents, as the ſame Excellent Perſon ſhews it to have been

Recherche de la Verité. Tom. 2. p. 165.

been in particular to the Authors of the *Scholaſtic* Philoſophy.

12. I ſhall not therefore go about to ſalve my own Aſſertion by denying *Des Cartes*'s Maxim, but rather by ſhewing that according to the true Senſe and intendment of it, it does not Contradict it. But firſt we muſt ſee what the true Senſe of it is, or rather in what Senſe it is true, though this may be without much difficulty Collected by any attentive Reader from what has been already ſaid in ſeveral places of this Chapter, wherein I have in great Meaſure prevented this Objection. But to Conſider it more directly; To verifie this Maxim that we are to Aſſent to nothing but what is Clear and Evident, the uſual way has been to diſtinguiſh between *Matters* of *Faith*, and *Matters* of *Reaſon*. In Matters of Faith, ſay they, we are to believe many things which we cannot Comprehend. And here then it ſeems this Rule muſt be laid aſide. But in Matters of Reaſon we muſt Aſſent to nothing but what is Clear and Evident. And here then it ſeems it holds. Accordingly when

'tis

'tis Objected againſt certain Articles of Faith that they are not to be comprehended by Reaſon, 'tis uſual to reply that theſe things do not belong to Reaſon *&c.* implying that if they did, then indeed the Objection would be good, and the incomprehenſibility of ſuch things would be an Argument againſt aſſenting to them, which implies again that in Matters of Reaſon we muſt not Aſſent to any thing but what is Clear and Evident, though in Matters of Faith we may. But we have remarqu'd already that even in Matters of Pure Reaſon we are forc'd to Aſſent to many things which we cannot comprehend, and that even in Matters of Faith we do in a Certain Senſe Aſſent upon Clear Evidence. This Diſtinction therefore will not do.

13. In ſtead therefore of diſtinguiſhing between Matters of Faith and Matters of Reaſon, I think it will be better to diſtinguiſh of *Evidence.* We are to Aſſent to Nothing ſave what is Clear and Evident, ſays our Maxim. Very Good. Now if by Evidence here be meant internal Evidence, and the Senſe be that we

are to assent to nothing but what in its own Nature, and by a Light intrinsic to it, is Evident, then the Maxim is False; and that not only in Matters of Faith, but also in Matters of Reason too, wherein we find our selves often Constrain'd to assent to things that have not this internal Evidence, but are (as to what respects the Nature of the things themselves) altogether Obscure and Incomprehensible. But if by Evidence here be Meant Evidence at large, abstracting from Internal or External, and the Sense be that we are to assent to nothing but what has some Evidence or other, either Internal or External, or what is some way or other evident to us, and what we see plainly to be true by a Light shining from within or from without, in short, what we have one way or other sufficient ground or Reason to assent to, then the Maxim is undoubtedly true, and will hold Universally, not only in Matters of Reason, but also in Matters of Faith too, which (as was shewn in the Chapter of Faith) is the Conclusion of a Syllogism, and so a Rational

Act,

Act, and proceedt upon as *Much*, though not the *Same* kind of Evidence, as any other Concluſion does, And that even in the Belief of Incomprehenſible things, which it would be abſurd, nay impoſſible to believe, if there were no Reaſon to believe things above Reaſon. According to a ſaying, as I take it of St. *Auſtin*, in one of his Letters to this purpoſe, *That we could not bring our ſelves to believe what is Above our Reaſon, if Reaſon it ſelf did not perſwade us that there are things which we ſhould do well to believe, although we are not capable of Comprehending them.* So then in ſhort, if this Maxim that we are to aſſent to nothing but what is Evident, be underſtood of Internal Evidence, then 'tis Falſe, not only in Matters of Faith but alſo in Matters of Reaſon, wherein things intrinſecally inevident are aſſented to. But if it be underſtood of Evidence at large then 'tis true, not only in Matters of Reaſon, but alſo in Matters of Faith, which (as has been often noted) is reaſonable in its Fund and Principle, and whoſe Evidence

muſt be Clear, though its Object may be Obſcure.

14. In this large therefore and indefinite Senſe of the Word *Evidence* the Maxim is to be underſtood. We are to aſſent to nothing but what is Clear and Evident, that is, we ought to make uſe of our liberty of Suſpenſion ſo far as not to give our Aſſent to any thing but what all things Conſider'd and upon the whole appears Evident to us, what by ſome Light or other we ſee and plainly perceive to be true, and what in one word we find ſufficient Reaſon either from within or from without to Aſſent to. According to that well known Sentence wherewith *Des Cartes* Concludes his wonderful Syſtem, *Nihilq; ab ullo Credi velim, niſi quod ipſi Evidens & invicta ratio perſuadebit.* I would have nothing believ'd by any one but what by evident and irreſiſtible reaſon he ſhall be Convinc'd of. And certainly he would be very unreaſonable that ſhould deſire more. For to aſſent without Evidence of one ſort or other that the thing aſſented to is true,

true, is to aſſent without a *why* or *wherefore*, and to aſſent ſo is to aſſent without Reaſon, which again is to aſſent not as a Rational Creature; and as Man ought not, ſo to be ſure God cannot require ſuch an Aſſent. To aſſent therefore to nothing but what upon ſome Conſideration or other is Clear and Evident to us, and what we have good reaſon to imbrace, as true, is certainly a Maxim of unqueſtionable Truth, and of univerſal Extent, that holds in all Matters whatſoever, whether of Reaſon or of Faith, in the former of which an Aſſent without Evidence would be the *Act*, and in the latter the *Sacrifice* of a *Fool*.

15. And that this is the true Senſe wherein *Des Cartes* intended his Maxim, as well as the true Senſe of the Maxim it ſelf, is plain from the Occaſion of it which as all know who are not utter Strangers to, or very Negligent Readers of his Books, was the bringing in and obtruding ſo many things in the Vulgar Philoſophy whereof the Introducers of them had ſuch Confuſe Notions;

and of whoſe reality and Exiſtence they had no Firm and Solid Reaſons to aſſure them, ſuch as Subſtantial Forms, really inhering Accidents and Qualities and the like, which ſerved rather to darken than clear up the Science of Nature, and were the Occaſions of a thouſand Errours in the Superſtructures that were rais'd upon thoſe Imaginary and Chimerical Principles. In Oppoſition to, and as a Remedy for which, he lays down this Fundamental Maxim, to be Carefully obſerv'd by all the Diſciples of Truth in their whole Intellectual Progreſs, never to aſſent to any thing but what is Clear and Evident, that is, to nothing but of whoſe Truth and Reality they are fully aſſured, and have ſufficient Reaſon to aſſent to. This is the true Senſe of the Maxim, this is the Senſe of its Author, and in this Senſe it is undeniably true. And that without any prejudice to our preſent Concluſion, with which (as thus explain'd) it is very Conſiſtent. For 'tis now very eaſie to diſcern that we may believe an Incomprehenſible thing, and yet at the ſame

time

time according to this *Carteſian* Maxim aſſent to nothing but what is Clear and Evident, becauſe the Evidence of Faith is External, and that there may be an External Evidence to aſſent to a thing Internally Inevident is no Contradiction.

16. Which by the way may ſerve to diſcover as well the Injuſtice as the Impertinence, 1. Of thoſe who make uſe of this Maxim as an Objection againſt the Belief of things above Reaſon. 2. Of thoſe who take occaſion from hence to traduce the *Carteſian* Philoſophy as favourable to, and looking with a very propitious Aſpect upon *Socinianiſm*, and indeed as little better than an Introduction to it, only becauſe it talks ſo much of clear and diſtinct Ideas and Conceptions, and of aſſenting to nothing but what is Clear and Evident. But Moſt of all 3dly. Of thoſe who proceed even to traduce the Author himſelf as a ſecret Friend to the Cauſe, and no better than a *Socinian* in Diſguiſe. It would have been indeed a Conſiderable Glory and Advantage to that, (or any other Intereſt) to have had ſo great

a Maſter of Reaſon a Friend to it. But he Certainly was not, if with his Words he has tranſmitted to us his real Thoughts, which would be great uncharity to queſtion, and, with a witneſs, to *Aſſent to what is not Evident*.

17. He was indeed a great Maſter in the Rational way, but no Magnifier or Exalter of Human Reaſon. So far from that, that he ſeems to have had the moſt inward and feeling Senſe of its Infirmities and Defects, and the beſt to have underſtood what a poor little thing 'tis to be a Man, of any one in the World. As may be abundantly Collected from ſeveral paſſages in his Writings (beſides that the whole vein of them runs that way) particularly thoſe two final Sentences wherewith he ſhuts up his *Principles* and his *Metaphyſics*, *At Nihilominus memor meæ tenuitatis*, *nihil affirmo* &c. and, *Naturæ noſtræ infirmitas eſt agnoſcenda*. Which plainly ſhew what a low debaſing Senſe he had both of Himſelf and of Human Nature in general, as tis Natural for every man to have more and more, the wiſer he

he grows, and the further he advances in Knowledge, which when all's done (provided you take a good Doſe of it) is the beſt Cure of Pride and Vanity.

18. And as he had thus ſlender an Opinion both of Human Reaſon and his Own, ſo he appears to have had alſo at the ſame ſuch an high-raiſed and elevated Senſe of the immenſe Grandeur of God, and of the Magnificence of his Works, and how inſcrutable the Profundities of both are to ſuch Finite and Contracted Minds as ours, as can ſcarce any where be parallel'd. Two Characters certainly of Spirit, that are none of the apteſt to diſpoſe a Man to *Socinianiſm*. But not to dwell any longer upon Rational Preſumptions, there is a certain plain and deciding place in the Writings of this Great Man (which one would think had eſcaped the Eyes of ſome) that is enough forever to ſilence the Calumny of his being even in the leaſt *Socinianiz'd*, and to ſhame thoſe that have ſo little Conſcience or Judgment as to

ſtain his Memory with it. For who can ſuſpect him in the leaſt infected with that Head-ſeizing Diſeaſe, which is now become ſo Popular and Epidemic, when he ſhall hear him ſtill Purging and Apologizing for himſelf in theſe Vindicatory words, *Credenda eſſe Omnia quæ a Deo revelata ſunt, quamvis Captum Noſtrum Excedant.* And again, *Ita ſi fortè nobis Deus de ſeipſo, vel aliis aliquid revelet, quod Naturales ingenii Noſtri vires excedat, qualia jam ſunt Myſteria Incarnationis & Trinitatis, non recuſabimus illa Credere, quamvis non Clare intelligamus. Nec ullo modo mirabimur multa eſſe, tum in immenſâ ejus Naturâ, tum etiam in rebus ab eo Creatis, quæ Captum Noſtrum excedant.* Now how glad ſhould I be to ſee all the *Socinians* in *Chriſtendom* Subſcribe to this Form of Words, and is it not ſtrange then that he whoſe Originally they are ſhould be ſuſpected of *Socinianiſm*, and that his Philoſophy too ſhould be thought to lead to it. But the Truth is, the *Carteſian* Philoſophy leads juſt as much to *Socinianiſm*, as

Princip. Philoſ. P. 7.

Philo-

Philoſophy in general does to *Atheiſm*, and I will venture to ſay, and be bound to make it good, that as no good *Philoſopher* can be an *Atheiſt*, ſo no good *Carteſian* can be a *Socinian*.

CHAP.

CHAP. VIII.

Wherein is ſhewn what is the true Uſe of Reaſon in Believing.

1. REaſon being the great Character and Principle of Man, that makes him like to the Angels above him, and diſtinguiſhes him from the Beaſts that are below him, and which therefore only are below him for want of the Rational Power (being many of them in regard of their Bodily Endowments upon a level with him, and ſome beyond him) 'tis but Juſt and Natural it ſhould appear in all that he does, and preſide and govern in all his Actions. For as the Conduct of the Infinitely Wiſe and All-knowing God does always carry in it the Characters of his Eſſential and Conſubſtantial Reaſon, even of him who is the Wiſdom of the Father, the true

true intelligible Light, ſo ſhould alſo the Conduct of Man expreſs in Proportion the Signatures of *his* Reaſon, and though he cannot act by ſuch exact and unerring Meaſures as his Glorious Maker, nor yet with all that Perfection of Wiſdom that even ſome Created Intelligences expreſs, yet at leaſt he ſhould act like Himſelf, and not by doing any thing abſurd or unaccountable deny his Reaſonable Nature.

2. This has ſerv'd for a Principle to ſome Scholaſtic and Moral Writers whereon to build a very high, and (as ſome think) very Severe Concluſion, *viz.* that there is no individual Action of Man purely *indifferent*. Which I ſuppoſe may be true enough of thoſe Actions of his which are properly *Humane*, I mean that are done deliberately, with fore-thought and Conſideration, every one of which muſt, as far as I can ſee, be either good or Bad according to the Circumſtances wherewith they are Cloath'd, however ſpecifically Conſider'd in rela-

relation to their Objects only, and as abſtracted from thoſe Circumſtances, ſome of them may be Indifferent. And certainly we cannot ſuppoſe any Action of a more Neutral and adiaphorous Nature than an *unprofitable Word*, and yet of ſuch He that is to be our Judge tells us we ſhall render an Account in the Day of Judgment. Which plainly ſhews that there is no ſuch thing as Indifferency in the Actions of Man as Individually and Concretely Conſider'd, but that all of them are either good or bad according as the Principle, Manner, End, and other Circumſtances are that attend the doing of them. And that becauſe Man being a Rational Creature the Order of Reaſon is due at leaſt to all his deliberate Actions, which accordingly ought to carry the Characters of a Rational Nature in them, the want of which will be enough to render any of them evil and imperfect.

3. But then if Reaſon ought to preſide and direct in all the deliberate Actions of Man much more ought

it

it in things of the greateſt Moment and Conſequence, wherein his Intereſt and Welfare is more nearly Concern'd, and which accordingly require his greateſt Conſideration, and the uſe of the beſt Light that he has. And becauſe there cannot be a thing of greater Conſequence and Concernment to him than *Religion*, upon which both his Preſent and his Future, his Temporal and his Eternal Happineſs does intirely depend, hence it follows that the Principal Uſe he ought to make of his Rational Faculty is in Religion, that here if any where he ought to Think, Conſider, Adviſe, Deliberate, Reaſon and Argue, Conſult both his own Light and that of others, neglect no advantage that may be had from Nature or Art, from Books or Men, from the Living or the Dead, but imploy all poſſible Means for his direction and Information, and not be as the *Horſe and Mule which have no Underſtanding*. For 'twas for this great End and Purpoſe that his Reaſon was given him, and this is the beſt Uſe he

Pſal. 32. 10.

he can make of it. As for the Study of Nature, that turns to too little an Account, and as for the Affairs of Civil Life they in themſelves and without relation to another World, are too little and inconſiderable for us to ſuppoſe that our Reaſon was given us for the Management of *them*. Religion only bears proportion to ſo Noble a Faculty, is moſt worthy of its Application, and can alſo beſt reward the due Exerciſe and Uſe of it, and accordingly 'tis upon Religion that it will be beſt beſtow'd.

4. Nor is there any thing in Religion that may juſtly fear to be brought before the Bar of Human Reaſon, or to undergo the Teſt of its ſevereſt Diſcuſſion. The *Heathen* Religion indeed Might, for which Cauſe thoſe that drew its Picture caſt a Shade upon a great part of it, and would not Venture to expoſe it to Common View. And the too much *Heathenized* Religion of ſome *Chriſtians* may alſo very deſervedly retire behind the Curtain, and decline coming to the Light,

Light, for fear the Abſurdities and Monſtrous Inconſiſtencies of it ſhould be laid open. But certainly there is not any thing, neither *Doctrine* nor *Precept* in that true Religion that is reveal'd by God, in Evangelical Chriſtianity, that need fly the Light of Reaſon, or refuſe to be tried by it. Chriſtian Religion is all over a *Reaſonable Service*, and the Author of it is too reaſonable a Maſter to impoſe any other, or to require (as his Vicar does) that Men ſhould follow him blindfold, and pull out their eyes to become his Diſciples. No, he that Miraculouſly gave Sight to ſo many has no need of, nor pleaſure in the *Blind*, nor has his Divine Religion any occaſion for ſuch Judges or Profeſſors. For it is the Religion of the Eternal and uncreated Wiſdom, the Divine *Word*, the true Light of the World, and the Univerſal Reaſon of all Spirits, and 'tis impoſſible that he ſhould reveal any thing that Contradicts the Meaſures of ſound Diſcourſe, or the immutable Laws of Truth, as indeed it is that any Divine Revelation

tion ſhould be truly Oppoſite to Right Reaſon (how'er it may ſometimes be *Above* it) or that any thing ſhould be *Theologically* true, which is *Philoſophically* Falſe, as ſome with great profoundneſs are pleas'd to diſtinguiſh. For the Light of Reaſon is as truly from God as the Light of Revelation is, and therefore though the latter of theſe Lights may exceed and out-ſhine the former, it can never be Contrary to it. God as the Soveraign Truth cannot reveal any thing againſt Reaſon, and as the Soveraign Goodneſs he cannot require us to believe any ſuch thing. Nay to deſcend ſome degrees below this, he cannot require us to believe, not only what is *againſt* Reaſon, but even what is *without* it. For to believe any thing without Reaſon is an unreaſonable Act, and 'tis impoſſible that God ſhould ever require an unreaſonable act, eſpecially from a Reaſonable Creature.

5. We therefore not only acknowledge the uſe of Reaſon in Religion, but alſo that 'tis in Religion

ligion that 'tis chiefly to be uſed; ſo far are we from denying the Uſe of it there. And it is a little unfairly done of our Adverſaries ſo much to inſinuate the Contrary as they do. For I cannot take it for leſs than ſuch an Inſinuation, when they are arguing with us againſt the Belief of the Chriſtian Myſteries to run out as they uſually do into Harangues and Flouriſhes (whereof, by the way, I know none more guilty than the Author of *Chriſtianity not Myſterious*) about the Reaſonableneſs of the Chriſtian Religion, and the Rational Nature of Faith, what a Reaſonable Act the One is, and what a Reaſonable Service the Other is, *&c.* as if we were againſt the Uſe of Reaſon in Religion, or were for a Blind, Groundleſs, and Unaccountable Faith, or if becauſe we hold the Belief of things above Reaſon, therefore we are for having no Reaſon for our Belief. This I ſay is an unfair Inſinuation, and ſuch as argues ſome want either of Judgment or Sincerity (I don't

know which) in thoſe that ſuggeſt it. For they ſeem plainly by running ſo much upon this Vein to imply as if it were part of the Queſtion between us, whether there be any Uſe of Reaſon in Religion, or whether Faith is to be Founded upon Reaſon or No. But Now this is no part of the Controverſie that lies between us, we acknowledge the Uſe of Reaſon in Religion as well as they, and are as little for a Senſeleſs and Irrational Faith as they can be. This therefore being Common to us both is no part of the Queſtion, and they do ill to inſinuate that it is by ſo many Popular Declamatory Strains upon the Reaſonableneſs of Religion, and in particular of Faith, whereas they do, or ſhould know, that the thing in Queſtion between us is not whether there be any Uſe of Reaſon to be made in Believing, but only what it is, or wherein the true Uſe of it does Conſiſt.

6. Now

6. Now this we may determine in a few words, having already laid the grounds of it. For ſince the Incomprehenſibility of a thing is no Concluding Argument againſt the Truth of it, nor Conſequently againſt the Belief of it (as is ſhewn in the three foregoing Chapters) it is plain that the proper Office and Buſineſs of a Believers Reaſon is to Examin and Inquire, Not whether the thing propoſed be Comprehenſible or not, but only whether it be Reveal'd by God or No, ſince if it be, the Incomprehenſibleneſs of it will be no Objection againſt it. That therefore ought to be no part of its Queſtiſtion or Deliberation, becauſe indeed it is not to the purpoſe to Conſider whether ſuch a thing be, when if it were it would be no juſt Objection. The only Conſiderable thing then here is whether ſuch a Propoſition be indeed from God, and has him for its Author or no. And here Reaſon is to clear her Eyes, put the Matter in the beſt Light, call in all the Aſſiſtance

that may be had both from the Heart and the Head, and determine of the thing with all the Judgement, and all the Sincerity that ſhe can. But as to the Comprehenſibility or Incomprehenſibility of the Article, this is quite beſides the Queſtion, and ought therefore to be no part of her ſcruting or debate, ſince if it were never ſo much above her Comprehenſion it would be never the leſs proper Object for her Belief.

7. The Sum is, the Incomprehenſibility of a thing is no Argument againſt the Belief of it, therefore in the believing of a thing, the proper work of my Reaſon is not to Conſider whether it be incomprehenſible. But when a thing is propoſed to me as from God, all that my Reaſon has to do in this Caſe is Seriouſly, Soberly, Diligently, Impartially, and (I add) *Humbly* to Examine whether it comes with the true *Credentials* of his Authority, and has him for its real Author or no. This is all that Reaſon has to do in this Matter, and when ſhe

ſhe has done this, ſhe is to riſe from the Seat of Judgement, and reſign it to Faith, which either gives or refuſes her Aſſent, Not as the thing propoſed is *Comprehenſible* or not *Comprehenſible*, but as 'tis either *Reveal'd* or not *Reveal'd*.

CHAP. IX.

An Application of the foregoing Considerations to the Mysteries of Christianity.

1. HAving thus raised the Shell of our Building to its due Pitch, we have now only to *Roof* it by making a Short Application of the Principles laid down and settled in the Former Chapters to the Mysteries of the Christian Religion, against the Truth and Belief of which it plainly appears from the Preceding Considerations that there lies now no Reasonable Objection. For if Human Reason be not the Measure of Truth, and if therefore the Incomprehensibility of a thing to Human Reason be no Argument of its not being True, nor Consequently against its being Believ'd, and if the only Use and Imployment

ployment of Reaſon in Believing be to Conſider, not the Internal Evidence of the thing, whether the Article be Comprehenſible or no, but whether it be truly reveal'd by God, I ſay if theſe things are ſo, as we have abundantly prov'd them to be, then from theſe Premiſes the Clear and undeniable Conſequence is that the Incomprehenſibility of the Chriſtian Myſteries is no juſt reaſon why they ſhould not be Believ'd, and ſo that we may Believe them though we ſhould ſuppoſe them (what yet ſome deny) to be Incomprehenſible.

2. Nay ſo far is the Incomprehenſible Sublimity of theſe Myſteries from being a ſufficient Objection againſt the Belief of them, that Accidentally and indirectly it may be improved into a Conſiderable Argument for them, and ſuch as may ſerve to recommend them to our Faith, inaſmuch as it is a very ſtrong Preſumption that they are of no Human Origin, but have God for their Authour, it being reaſonable to ſuppoſe that what does ſo very much tranſcend the Capa-

city of Man to Comprehend, does no leſs exceed his Ability to invent. And accordingly the Incomprehenſibility of our Myſteries for which ſome will have them to be falſe, is made uſe of by a very Rational Authour as an Argument of their Truth. And it may be worth while to let the Reader ſee how he Manages it in relation to One of the Moſt Sublime of them. *The more Obſcure are our Myſteries. Strange Paradox! the more Credible they now appear to me. Yes, I find even in the Obſcurity of our Myſteries, receiv'd as they are by ſo many different Nations, an invincible Proof of their Truth. How, for inſtance, ſhall we accord the Unity with the Trinity, the Society of three different Perſons in the perfect Simplicity of the Divine Nature? This without doubt is Incomprehenſible, but not Incredible. It is indeed above us, but let us Conſider a little and we ſhall believe it, at leaſt if we will be of the ſame Religion with the Apoſtles. For ſuppoſing they had not known this ineffable Myſtery, or that they had not taught it to their Succeſſors, I maintain that it is not Poſſible*

Entretiens ſur la Metaphyſ. & ſur la Relig. p. 382.

Possible that a Sentiment so extraordinary should find in the Minds of Men such an Universal Belief as is given to it in the whole Church, and among so many different Nations. The More this Adorable Mystery appears Monstrous (suffer the Expression of the Enemies of our Faith) the More it Shocks Human Reason, the More the Imagination Mutinies against it, the more Obscure, Incomprehensible and Impenetrable it is, the less Credible is it that it should Naturally insinuate it self into the Minds and Hearts of all Christians of so many and so distant Countries. Never do the same Errours spread universally, especially such sort of Errours which so strangely offend the Imagination, which have nothing sensible in them, and which seem to Contradict the most Simple and Common Notions. If Jesus Christ did not Watch over his Church, the Number of the Unitarians would quickly exceed that of the Orthodox Christians. For there is nothing in the Sentiment of these Heretics that does not enter Naturally into the Mind. And 'tis very Conceivable that Opinions that are proportion'd to our Understandings

derſtandings may eſtabliſh themſelves in time. But that a Truth ſo Sublime, ſo far removed from Senſe, ſo Croſs to Human Reaſon, ſo Contrary in ſhort to all Nature as is this great Myſtery of our Faith, that a Truth I ſay of this Character ſhould ſpread it ſelf Univerſally, and Triumph over all Nations where the Apoſtles had Preach'd the Goſpel, ſuppoſing that theſe Firſt Preachers of our Faith had neither known any thing, nor ſaid any thing of this Myſtery, this Certainly is what cannot be Conceiv'd by any one that has never ſo little knowledge of Human Nature. That there ſhould be Heretics that ſhould oppoſe a Doctrine ſo Sublime is nothing ſtrange, nor am I ſurprized at it. On the Contrary I ſhould be very much if never any body had oppoſed it. This Truth wanted but little of being quite oppreſs'd. 'Tis very poſſible. For 'twill be always reckon'd a Commendable Undertaking to attaque that which ſeems to Claſh with Reaſon. But that at length the Myſtery of the Trinity ſhould prevail, and ſhould eſtabliſh it ſelf Univerſally wherever the Religion of Jeſus Chriſt was receiv'd, without

its being known and taught by the Apoſtles, without an Authority and a Force Divine, *there needs methinks but an Ordinary Meaſure of good Senſe to acknowledge that nothing in the World is leſs Probable. For it is not in the leaſt likely that a* Doctrine *ſo* Divine, *ſo above Reaſon, ſo remov'd from whatever may ſtrike the Imagination and the Senſes, ſhould Naturally Come into the Thought of Man.*

3. You ſee here how this Excellent Perſon ſtrikes Light out of Darkneſs, by improving even the Incomprehenſibility of the Chriſtian Myſteries into an Argument for the Truth and Credibility of them, and ſo turning the Artillery of our Adverſaries againſt themſelves. This indeed is a bold Atchievement, and as Fortunate a one too, for I think there is a great deal of Force and Weight in his Reaſoning. But I need not puſh the Matter ſo far, nor follow ſo home into the Enemies Camp, as to plant their own Cannon againſt them. 'Tis ſufficient to the deſign of the preſent undertaking, and as much as I am led

led to by the Principles before Eſtabliſh'd, to Conclude that the Incomprehenſibility of the Chriſtian Myſteries is no Argument againſt them. This therefore I inſiſt upon, and (if my Reaſon mightily deceive me not) dare ingage finally to ſtand to. For if (as it has been ſhewn) the Incomprehenſibility of a thing in general be no Concluſive Argument againſt either the Truth or the Credibility of it, then ſince Negative Propoſitions do ſeparate the Attribut from the Subject according to all the Extent which the Subject has in the Propoſition, what Conſequence can be more Clear than that the Incomprehenſibility of our Myſteries is no Argument againſt the Belief of them? I Conclude therefore that it is None, and that they ought never the leſs to be believ'd for their being Incomprehenſible, ſuppoſing them otherwiſe ſufficiently Reveal'd.

4. Whether they are ſo or no is beſides my Undertaking at preſent to examin, nor need I ingage my Pen in this Queſtion, ſince the Affirmative ſide of it is ſo Obvious to

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to every Eye that can but read the Bible, and has been withal ſo abundantly and convincingly made good by thoſe abler hands which have gone into the Detail of the Controverſie, and undertaken the particular defence of the Chriſtian Myſteries. This part of the Argument therefore being ſo well diſcharged already, I ſhall Concern my ſelf no further with it than only in Conſequence and Purſuance of the Former Principles to beſtow upon it this one ſingle Neceſſary Remarque, *viz.* That as the Incomprehenſibility of the Chriſtian Myſteries is no juſt Objection againſt the Belief of them ſuppoſing them otherwiſe ſufficiently Reveal'd, ſo neither is it a juſt Objection againſt their being ſo Reveal'd, ſuppoſing the plain, obvious and literal Conſtruction of the Words does naturally and directly lead to ſuch a Senſe. And that it does ſo is not I think offer'd to be denied, and the thing it ſelf is plain enough to extort an acknowledgement, but then 'tis pretended that there is a Neceſſity of having recourſe to a different Conſtruction, and

and to underſtand the words in another Senſe, becauſe of the unconceivableneſs and incomprehenſibleneſs of that which their proper and Grammatical Scheme does Exhibit. But by the Tenour of this whole Diſcourſe it evidently appears that there is no ſuch Neceſſity, ſince to admit an incomprehenſible Senſe has nothing abſurd or inconvenient in it, and that becauſe the Incomprehenſibility of a thing is no Argument of the Untruth of it. From whence it plainly follows that 'tis no more an Objection againſt its being Reveal'd than 'tis an Objection againſt the Belief of it ſuppoſing it were Reveal'd, there being nothing but the untruth of a thing that can be a reaſonable Obſtruction againſt either.

5. We are therefore to take the Words of Scripture according to their proper and moſt Natural Senſe, and not ſeek out for Forc'd and Strain'd Interpretations upon the account of the Incomprehenſibility of that which is apparently Genuin and Natural. And if the Revelation be otherwiſe plain, and ſuch as

we

we would accept of in another Caſe, and about matters which we can well Comprehend, we ought not to think it the leſs ſo becauſe the Senſe of it ſo underſtood is ſuch as we cannot reconcile to our Apprehenſions and Conceptions of things. For notwithſtanding that it may be true, ſince by this time we may be ſufficiently ſatisfied that there are many Incomprehenſible Truths. The Incomprehenſibility of a thing is therefore no Argument againſt its being Reveal'd, any more than 'tis againſt the Belief of it ſuppoſing it were. Which opens an immediate Entrance to the Chriſtians Myſteries, which I doubt not would be thought ſufficiently Reveal'd were it not for the incomprehenſibility of them, the only Objection that can be pretended againſt their Revelation.

6. I have hitherto argued upon the Suppoſition that the Myſteries of Chriſtianity (thoſe Doctrines I mean that are ſo call'd) are above Reaſon, and ſuch as do tranſcend our Comprehenſion, and have ſhewn that even upon that Suppoſition there

there is no reaſonable Objection a-gainſt the Belief of them, that they are never the leſs Believable for their being Incomprehenſible. But what if I ſhould recall this Conceſſion, and put our Adverſaries to the proof that they are indeed above Human Reaſon and Comprehenſion. They cannot be ignorant that there are thoſe that Contend they are not, and with great ſhew of reaſon offer to prove it, by endeavouring to render a Conceivable and Intelligible Account of them. If theſe Men ſhould be in the right (which I do not think neceſſary at preſent to inquire into) it would be a further Advantage to our Cauſe, and ſuch as though I do not now inſiſt upon it, I need not loſe the Benefit of. But if it ſhould prove that they are not in the right, the Cauſe of our Chriſtian Myſteries is not much Concern'd in the loſs of that Pillar, but can ſupport it ſelf well enough without it, as having another that is ſufficient to bear its weight, ſince though we ſhould ſuppoſe theſe Sacred Doctrines to be never ſo Incomprehenſible to our *Reaſon*, it does by

by no Conſequence follow (as from the Argument of this whole Diſcourſe is apparent) that therefore they may not be due Objects of our Faith.

7. Should any one now be ſo fond of Objection as to draw one againſt the Myſteries of Chriſtianity from the uſe of the Word Myſtery in Scripture, which knows no other Myſteries but ſuch as before the Revelation of them were undiſcover'd, not Conſidering whether they were in themſelves Conceivable or no, I muſt tell him that I do not know that ever I met in any Controverſie with a leſs pertinent Objection, as much as it is made of by a late Bold Writer, who heaps together a great many Texts to ſhew the ſignification of the Word Myſtery in the New Teſtament, that it ſignifies not things in themſelves inconceivable, but only ſuch as were not known before they were Reveal'd. Well, be it ſo as this Gentleman pretends (though I believe upon Examination it would appear otherwiſe) yet what is this to the purpoſe? For do we Diſpute about *Names* or *Things?* *Chriſtianity not Myſter.* p. 90.

The Queſtion is not whether the Scripture expreſſes inconceivable things by the Name of Myſteries, but whether there be not things in Scripture above our Conception (call them by what Name you will) and if there be, whether their being ſo above our Conception be an Argument why they ſhould not be Believ'd. Now to theſe inconceivable things it has been the Common Uſe of Church-Writers to apply the Name of *Myſteries*, which, if the thing be granted, he muſt be a great Lover of Cavil and Wrangle that will Contend about it. But the Learned Biſhop of *Worceſter* has already prevented me in the Conſideration of this Objection, for which reaſon, together with the Frivolouſneſs of it, I ſhall purſue it no further.

Serm. of the Myſteries of the Chriſtian Faith.

CHAP.

CHAP. X.

The Concluſion of the Whole, with an Addreſs to the Socinians.

1. AND thus I have led my Reader through a long Courſe of Various Reaſoning, and perhaps as far as he is willing to follow me, though I hope his Journey has not been without ſome *Pleaſure* that may *deceive*, and ſome *Profit* that may in part *reward* the Labour of it. I have ſhewn him what *Reaſon* is, and what *Faith* is, that ſo he may ſee from the Abſolute Natures of each what Habitude and Relation they have to one another, and how the Darkneſs and Obſcurity of the Latter may Conſiſt with the Light and Evidence of the Former. I have alſo Conſider'd the Diſtinction of things Above Reaſon and things Contrary to Reaſon, and ſhewn it to be real and well-grounded, and to have all that is requiſite to a good Diſtinction.

on. And for the further Confirmation of it, I have alſo ſhewn that Human Reaſon is not the Meaſure of Truth. From which Great Principle (which I was the more willing to diſcourſe at large and thoroughly to ſettle and eſtabliſh becauſe of its Moment and Conſequence to the Concern in hand) I have deduced that weighty Inference, that therefore the Incomprehenſibility of a thing is no Concluding Argument of its not being true, which Conſequence for the greater Security of it, becauſe it is ſo Conſiderable in the preſent Controverſie, I have alſo proved *Backwards*, by ſhewing that if the Incomprehenſibility of a thing were an Argument of its not being true, then Human Reaſon (contrary to what was before demonſtrated) would be the Meaſure of Truth. Whence I infer again *ex Abſurdo*, that therefore the Incomprehenſibility of a thing is no Argument of its not being true. From this laſt Conſequence I infer another of no leſs Moment and Conſideration, *viz.* That therefore the Incomprehenſibility of a thing is no Argument againſt

againſt the Belief of it neither, where alſo I Conſider that ſeemingly Oppoſite Maxim of *Des Cartes*, that we are to Aſſent to nothing but what is Clear and Evident, and reconcile it to the other Poſition. Whence my next ſtep was to ſtate the true uſe of Reaſon in Believing, which I ſhew'd to Conſiſt not in examining the Credibility of the Object, but in taking account of the Certainty of the Revelation, which when once reſolv'd of we are no longer to Diſpute, but Believe. In fine, I have made an Application of theſe Conſiderations to the Myſteries of the Chriſtian Faith, by ſhewing that they are never the leſs to be Believ'd for being Myſteries, ſuppoſing them otherwiſe ſufficiently Reveal'd, againſt which alſo I have ſhewn their Incomprehenſibility to be no Objection. So that every way the Great Argument againſt the Myſteries of the Chriſtian Faith taken from the Incomprehenſibility of them vaniſhes and ſinks into nothing. In all which I think I have effectually overthrown the General and Fundamental Ground of *Socinianiſm*,

and truely in great Meaſure that of *Deiſm* too, whoſe beſt Argument againſt Reveal'd Religion in general, is, becauſe the *Chriſtian*, upon all Accounts the moſt preferable of thoſe that pretend to be Reveal'd, Contains ſo many things in it which tranſcend the Comprehenſion of Human Underſtanding. But whether this Beſt Argument be really a good one or no, the whole Procedure of this Diſcourſe may ſufficiently ſhew, and whoever knows how to diſtinguiſh Sophiſtry from good Reaſoning, may eaſily judge.

2. And now you *Gentlemen* for whoſe ſakes I have been at the pains to write this Treatiſe, give me leave in a few words to Addreſs my ſelf a little more particularly to you, and to Expoſtulate with you. Whether it be the good opinion you have of your Cauſe, or the preſent Opportunity you have to appear in the behalf of it that invites you ſo freely to Come abroad as you have done of late, you have certainly (to give your Courage its due) taken a very rational and Polite Age for it, and I hope the Wiſe Conduct of Provi-

Providence may turn this juncture to the Advantage of the Truth, and that the Light to which you have adventur'd to expoſe your Novel Opinions may ſerve to make you ſee their Abſurdities, if you do not too Obſtinately ſhut your Eyes againſt it. Some of you are Conſiderable Maſters of Reaſon (otherwiſe truly I ſhould not think it worth while to argue with you) and you all profeſs great *Devotion* to it (I wiſh you do not make it an *Idol*) and to be very Zealous and Affectionate Diſciples of it. Reaſon is the great Meaſure by which you pretend to go, and the Judge to whom in all things you appeal. Now I accept of your Meaſure, and do not refuſe to be tried in the Court of your own Chuſing. Accordingly you ſee I have dealt with you all along upon the Ground of Logic, and in a Rational way, being very Confident that Reaſon alone will diſcover to you your undue Elevations of it, and the Errours you have been miſled into by that Occaſion, if you do but Conſult even this Oracle of yours

as you ought, and make a right uſe of its Sacred Light.

3. But I am afraid you do not. Inſtead of imploying your Reaſon in the firſt place to examin the *Certainty* of the *Revelation*, whether ſuch a thing be truly Reveal'd, and if ſo, to believe it notwithſtanding its being incomprehenſible, your Method is to begin with the *Quality* of the *Object*, to Conſider whether it be Comprehenſible or no, and accordingly to proceed in your Belief or Disbelief of its being Reveal'd. 'Tis true indeed you are not ſo groſs as to argue thus, this is Comprehenſible therefore 'tis Reveal'd. But you cannot deny but that you argue thus, this is Incomprehenſible, therefore 'tis not Reveal'd, proceeding upon this general Principle that though whatever is Comprehenſible is not therefore preſently Reveal'd, yet whatever is Reveal'd muſt be Comprehenſible. But now judge you whether this be not to make your Reaſon the Rule and Meaſure of Divine Revelation, that is, that God can reveal nothing to you but what you can Comprehend, or, that you

you are able to Comprehend all that God can poſſibly Reveal (for otherwiſe how is your not being able to Comprehend any thing an Argument of its not being Reveal'd) I ſay Conſider whether this be not to ſet up your Reaſon as the Rule of Revelation, and Conſider again whether this does not reſolve either into a very low Opinion you have of God and his Infinite Perfections, or an extravagantly high one you have of your ſelves and your own Rational indowments.

4. And yet as if this were not Preſumption enough, do you not alſo make your Reaſon the Rule of *Faith*, as well as of *Revelation*? To be the Rule of Faith is a very Great thing, and yet ſo far 'tis plain that you make your Reaſon the Rule of Faith that you will allow nothing to be believ'd but whoſe Bottom you can Sound by that Line, this being an avow'd Principle with you that you are to believe nothing but what you can Comprehend. But hold a little, before your Reaſon can be the Meaſure of *Faith*, muſt it not be the Meaſure of *Truth*? And I pray

pray Conſider ſeriouſly, and tell me truly, do you verily think in your Conſciences that your Reaſon is the Meaſure of Truth? Do you think your Rational Faculties proportion'd to every intelligible Object, and that you are able to Comprehend all the things that are, and that there is nothing in the whole extent of Science too high, too difficult, or too abſtruſe for you, no one part of this vaſt Intellectual Sea but what you can wade through? If you ſay yes, beſides the Blaſphemous Preſumption and *Luciferian* Arrogance of the Aſſertion, and how little it falls on this ſide of *Similis ero Altiſſimo*, which baniſh'd the vain-glorious Angel from the Court of Heaven, becauſe nothing leſs would Content his Aſpiring Ambition than to be as God there (though by the way there is more Senſe and Congruity of Reaſon in pretending to be a God in Heaven, than to be a God upon Earth) I ſay beſides this, I would put it to your more ſober thought to Conſider whether it be not every whit as great an Extremity in the way of Rational Speculation to Dogmatize

matize ſo far as to pretend to Comprehend every thing, as to ſay with the *Sceptics* and *Pyrrhonians* that we know nothing: The latter of which however in regard of its Moral Conſequences may be more innocently and ſafely affirm'd than the Former, ſince in that we only humbly degrade our ſelves, and are Content to ſink down into the Level of Brutes, whereas in this we aſpire to what is infinitely above us, and advance our ſelves into the Seat of God. And you know an Exceſs of Self-dejection is of the two the more tolerable Extreme. But if you ſay that your Reaſon is not the Meaſure of Truth (as upon this, and the other Conſiderations there lies a Neceſſity upon you to Confeſs) how then I pray comes it to be the Meaſure of your *Faith*, and how come you to lay down this for a Maxim that you will believe Nothing but what you can Comprehend? Why, if your Reaſon be not the Meaſure of Truth (and you your ſelves Care not, and I believe are aſham'd in terms to ſay that it is) then do you not evidently diſcern that there is no Conſequence from the Incomprehenſibility

prehenſibility of a thing to the incredibility of it, and that you have no reaſon to deny your Belief to a thing as true merely upon the account of its incomprehenſibility. And do you not then plainly ſee that your great Maxim falls to the ground, that you are to believe nothing but what you can Comprehend? But if yet notwithſtanding this you will ſtill adhere to your beloved Maxim, and reſolve to believe Nothing but what you can adjuſt and clear up to your Reaſon, then I pray Conſider whether this will not neceſſarily lead you back to that Abſurd, and withal Odious and Invidious Principle, and which therefore you your ſelves care not to own, viz. *That your Reaſon is the Meaſure of Truth.*

5. But why do you not care to own it? Do you not ſee at the firſt caſt of your Eye that you are unavoidably driven upon it by your profeſs'd Maxim? Or if you do not think fit to own it (as indeed it is a good handſom Morſel to ſwallow) why do you not then renounce that Maxim of yours which is the immediate

mediate Conſequence of it, and neceſſarily reſolves into it? Why will you whoſe Pretenſions are ſo high to Reaſon act ſo directly againſt the Laws of it, as to own that implicitly and by Conſequence which neither your Head nor your Heart will ſerve you to acknowledge in broad and expreſs Terms? Be a little more Conſiſtent with your own Sentiments at leaſt, if not with Truth, and be not your ſelves a *Myſtery*, while you pretend not to believe any. If you do not care to own the Principle, then deny the Conſequence, or if you will not let go the Conſequence, then ſtand by and own the Principle. Either ſpeak out boldly and roundly that your Reaſon is the Meaſure of Truth, or if you think that too groſs a defiance to Senſe, Experience, Religion and Reaſon too to be profeſſedly maintain'd, then be ſo ingenuous to us, and ſo Conſiſtent with your ſelves as to renounce your Maxim of Believing Nothing but what you can Comprehend, ſince you cannot hold it but with that Abſurd Principle; And which is therefore a Certain Argument

ment that you ought not to hold it.

6. And are you ſure that you always do, I mean ſo as to act by it, that you hold it *in Hypotheſi* as well as *in Theſi?* Do you never aſſent to any thing but what you can Comprehend? Are there not many things in the *Sciences* which you find a preſſing Neceſſity to Subſcribe to, though at the ſame time you cannot conceive their *Modus*, or account for their Poſſibility? But you'l ſay perhaps theſe are things of a Phyſical and Philoſophical Conſideration, and ſuch as have no relation to Religion. True, they are ſo, but then beſides that this viſibly betrays the weakneſs of your ground, ſince if the incomprehenſibility of a thing were a good Argument againſt aſſenting to the Truth of it, it would be ſo throughout, in the things of Nature, as well as in the things of Religion, I would here further demand of you why you are ſo particularly ſhy of admitting incomprehenſible things in Religion, why is it there only that you ſeem ſo ſtiffly and zealouſly to adhere to your Maxim of Believing nothing

nothing but what you can Comprehend? Since there are ſo many inconceivable things, or if you pleaſe, *Myſteries*, in the Works of Nature and of Providence, why not in Religion? Nay where ſhould one expect to find Myſteries if not there, where all the things that are Reveal'd are Reveal'd by God himſelf, and many of them concerning Himſelf and his own Infinite Perfections? And what deference do we pay to God more than Man, if either we ſuppoſe that he cannot reveal Truths to us which we cannot Comprehend, or if we will not believe them if he does? Nay may it not be rather ſaid that we do not pay him ſo much, ſince we think it adviſeable to receive many things from our Tutours and Maſters upon their Authority only though we do not Comprehend them our ſelves, and juſtifie our doing ſo by that well known and in many Caſes very reaſonable Maxim, *Diſcentem oportet Credere.* But as there is no Authority like the Divine, ſo if that *Motto* become any School, 'tis that of Chriſt.

7. Now

7. Now 'tis in this School that you profeſs to be Scholars, and why then will you be ſuch Opiniative and uncompliant Diſciples as to refuſe to receive the Sublime Lectures read to you by your Divine and Infallible Maſter, merely becauſe they are too high for you, and you cannot Conceive them, when at the ſame time any one of you that is not a Mathematician (pardon the Suppoſition) would I doubt not take it upon the word of him that is ſo that *the Diameter of a Square is incommenſurable to the Side*, though he did not know how to demonſtrate, or ſo much as Conceive it himſelf. Since then you would expreſs ſuch implicit regard to the Authority of a fallible, though Learned, Man, ſhall not the Divine weigh infinitely heavier with you, and ſince you would not ſtick to aſſent to things above your Conception in Human and Natural Sciences, why are you ſo violently ſet againſt Myſteries in Religion, whereof God is not only the *Author*, but in great Meaſure the *Object* too.

8. You

8. You know very well that in the great Problem of the Diviſibility of Quantity there are Incomprehenſibilities on both ſides, it being inconceivable that Quantity ſhould, and it being alſo inconceivable that it ſhould not be divided infinitely. And yet you know again that as being parts of a Contradiction one of them muſt neceſſarily be true. Poſſibly you may not be able with the utmoſt Certainty and without all heſitation to determine which that is, but however you know in the general that One of them, indeterminately, muſt be true (which by the way is enough to Convince you that the Incomprehenſibility of a thing is no Argument againſt the truth of it) and you muſt alſo further grant that God whoſe Underſtanding is infinite does preciſely and determinately know which of them is ſo. Now ſuppoſe God ſhould Reveal this, and make it an Article of Faith. 'Tis not indeed likely that he will, it being ſo much beneath the Majeſty, and beſides the End and Intention of Revelation, whoſe great Deſign is the

direction of our Life and Manners, and not the improvement of our Speculation. But ſuppoſe I ſay he ſhould, would you not believe it? If not, then you muſt ſuppoſe either that there is no Neceſſity that either of the two parts (which yet are Contradictory) ſhould be true, or that though one of them be true yet that God does not know which is ſo, or that though he does know which is ſo, yet he does not deal faithfully in revealing that which is the Right, all which are extravagant Suppoſitions, and ſuch as Men of your Senſe and Reaſon can never allow. But then if you ſay (as you muſt) that you would believe it, then I pray what becomes of your Maxim of believing nothing but what you can Comprehend, and why do you ſo ſtiffly plead the incomprehenſibility of an Article of Faith againſt the Belief of it, and why muſt there be no Myſteries in Religion? I ſay in Religion, where if any where our Reaſon might expect to find things above its Meaſure, unreachable Heights, and unfathomable Depths, and where God

is

is not only the *Revealer* (as in the Caſe now ſuppoſed) but alſo the *Object Reveal'd*. For is it not reaſonable to ſuppoſe that there are things more incomprehenſible in God than in Nature, and if you would receive an Incomprehenſible Revelation of his concerning his *Works*, how much rather ought you to admit the ſame concerning *Himſelf*?

9. And this gives me occaſion to ſay ſomething to you concerning the Doctrine of the *Holy Trinity*. This great Article of the Chriſtian Faith you have a particular Prejudice againſt and will not believe, and that becauſe it ſo utterly tranſcends the Force of Reaſon to Conceive how the ſame undivided and Numerically One Simple Eſſence of God ſhould be Communicated to Three really diſtinct Perſons, ſo as that there ſhould be both a Unity in Trinity, and a Trinity in Unity. This however, as inconceivable as it ſeems, ſome will not yeild to be ſo far Above Reaſon but that a Rational and Intelligible Account may be given of it, which accordingly

they have eſſay'd to do by ſeveral *Hypotheſes*. But I decline at preſent all advantage that may be had from them, or any other that may be invented to render this an intelligible Article. You know I Reaſon all along upon the Contrary Suppoſition, that thoſe Articles of the Chriſtian Faith which we call Myſteries are really incomprehenſible, and only go to invalidate the Conſequence that is drawn from thence in prejudice of their Belief. Well then for once we will give you what you ſtand for, that the Doctrine of the *Trinity* is indeed utterly above Reaſon. You have our leave to ſuppoſe it as incomprehenſible as you pleaſe. But then you are to Conſider (beſides what has hitherto been diſcours'd concerning the Nullity of the Conſequence from the incomprehenſibility of a thing to its incredibility) that this is a Revelation of God concerning *Himſelf*, and do you pretend to Comprehend the Nature and Eſſence of God? If you do, then your Underſtanding is as infinite as the Divine. But if you do not, then the incom-

incomprehenſibility of this Myſterious Article ought to be no Objection with you againſt the Belief of it, ſince if it be, you muſt be driven to ſay that you Comprehend the Nature of God, which I hope you have too much Religion as well as Reaſon to affirm.

10. And indeed if we meet with ſo many inſuperable Difficulties in the Search of Nature, much more may we in the Contemplation of its Author, if the Works of God do ſo puzzle and baffle our Underſtandings, much more may they Confeſs their Deficiency when God himſelf is their Object, and if we are not able to explain *Creation*, or give an Account how the Material World iſſued in time from the great Fountain of Being, much leſs may we be ſuppoſed able to explain the Eternal and ineffable *Generation* of his Divine and Conſubſtantial Word. But what then, ſhall we not Believe it? Or rather ſhall we not ſay upon this Occaſion with the Pious and Ingenious Mr. *Weſley*, *Life of Chriſt*, p. 184.

Ineffable the way, for who
Th' Almighty to perfection ever knew?
But He himself has ſaid it, and it muſt be true.

Nay to go lower yet, if there be ſo many things relating to Extenſion, Motion and Figure (of all which we have Clear Ideas) which we cannot Comprehend, and there reſult from them Propoſitions which we know not what to make of, with how much greater reaſon may we expect to find what we cannot Underſtand in the Nature of an Infinite Being, whereof we have no adequate Idea. And indeed we meet with ſo many Incomprehenſibles in the School of Nature that one would think we ſhould be too much familiarized to 'em to think them ſtrange in that of Religion, and God ſeems on purpoſe to exerciſe and diſcipline our Underſtandings with what is above them in Natural things, that ſo we might be the leſs ſurprized to find what paſſes our Conception in his own

Infinite

Infinite Eſſence. Here then at leaſt you may Confeſs your Ignorance, and that without any reproach to your Underſtandings, which were indeed intended for the *Contemplation*, but not for the *Comprehenſion* of an Infinite Object. You need not therefore here be backward to own that you meet with what you cannot Comprehend (it would indeed be a Miſtery if you ſhould not) nor think it any diſgrace to have your Eyes dazzl'd with that Light at the inſupportable Glory of which even the *Seraphin* Veil and Cover theirs.

11. You may perceive by this that your Denial of the Doctrine of the Trinity becauſe of the Incomprehenſibility of it proceeds upon no *good* Conſequence, but you are alſo further deſired to Conſider the very *Bad* one that it Naturally leads to. You refuſe to receive this Article becauſe you cannot Comprehend it, but beſides that your Reaſon for this your refuſal is not good unleſs you could be ſuppoſed to Comprehend every thing, even *the Deep things of God*. Pray Conſider what

the Conſequence will be if you purſue your Principle to the utmoſt, and Conduct your ſelves intirely by its Meaſures. Will it not inevitably lead you to the denial of all Religion? This perhaps may ſtartle you, but think again. Will not this neceſſarily lead you to the denial of God the Foundation of all Religion? For if you will not believe the Trinal Diſtinction of Perſons in the Divine Eſſence becauſe you cannot conceive how ſuch a thing can be, then may you not for the ſame reaſon refuſe as well to believe the Divine Eſſence it ſelf, ſome of whoſe incommunicable Attributes, ſuch as his *Self Exiſtence*, *Eternity*, *Immenſity*, &c. are as Incomprehenſible as any thing in the Notion of the Trinity can be. So that if you will but follow your Meaſure from the denial of *Three* you may be quickly brought to deny even *One*. So directly does your Principle of Believing nothing but what you can Comprehend lead to *Atheiſm*, and that with ſuch ſwift and wide ſtrides, that were it not for the aſſiſtance of the ſame expe-

dient,

dient, your Friends the *Deiſts* would hardly be able to follow you.

12. And now Sirs what do you think of your Principle? Is it not a goodly one, and richly worth all the Paſſion and Zeal you have expreſs'd for it? You know very well that *M. Abbadie* in his Excellent Treatiſe of the Divinity of Chriſt has ſhewn you that upon one of your grounds (*viz.* the denial of that Article) the *Mahumetan* Religion is preferable to the Chriſtian, and indeed that you are Obliged by it to renounce Chriſtianity and turn *Mahumetans*. This truly was a home-thruſt. But yet you ſee the Conſequence of your general Principle reaches further, as leading you not only out of Chriſtianity, but out of all Religion whether Natural or Reveal'd, even beyond Deiſm, even into Atheiſm it ſelf. If it does not actually lead you thither the fault is not in the Principle, whoſe Connexion with that Conſequence is natural enough, but 'tis becauſe you are not ſo Conſiſtent with your ſelves as to follow it. And indeed 'tis a great Happineſs that you do not,

not, (ſince if you were here better Logicians you would be worſe Men) though it would be a much greater, if for the danger of being more Conſiſtent with it you would be perſwaded to lay it down.

13. And that you may be ſo be pleaſed further to Conſider, that though this Principle of yours does not eventually carry you as far as *Atheiſm*, becauſe perhaps the Horridneſs of the Concluſion may be a Counterweight againſt the Force of the Premiſes (though you ſee it Naturally tends that way) yet there is very great danger of its leading you Effectually into *Deiſm*, that not being not accounted now-a-days ſuch a very frightful thing. For as long as you hold that what is above Human Reaſon is not to be Believ'd, and upon that Account reject the Chriſtian Myſteries, becauſe they are above Reaſon, you lie at the Mercy of that Argument that ſhall prove to you that theſe Myſteries are indeed Reveal'd, and that the Genuin and Natural Senſe of the Sacred Text declares for them. For if you once come to be convinc'd of that, you

you will then be Obliged in Conſequence of your Principle to renounce that Religion which reveals ſuch incredible things, that is the *Chriſtian*, which will be a ſhrew'd (indeed an invincible) Temptation to you to throw up all Reveal'd Religion, and ſo to turn perfect *Deiſts*. And I pray God it may not have that Effect upon you.

14. But as to the parting with Chriſtianity that you will be further tempted to do upon another account. For when you have by your Principle ſtript it, or I may ſay rather *unbowell'd* it of its great and adorable Myſteries, it will appear ſuch a poor, lank, ſlender thing to you that you will hardly think it Conſiderable enough to be reveal'd as a New and more perfect Inſtitution by God, or to be receiv'd as ſuch by thinking and Conſidering Men. For what will ſuch find ſo conſiderable in Chriſtianity (eſpecially as a new Inſtitution) what ſo viſibly peculiar and aſſuredly diſtinguiſhing, what that may infallibly ſet it above an Humane Inſtitution, if it be once robb'd of its Myſteries? They may indeed think

it

it a good plain piece of Morals, and ſuch as exceeds any other of a known Humane Compoſure, but how are they ſure but that the Invention of Man may be able to riſe ſo high, as to Compoſe ſuch a Syſtem as this, if you ſet aſide its Myſteries? Which therefore I cannot but look upon of all the things that are intrinſic to it (for I do not here Conſider *Miracles*) as the greateſt Characters of its Divinity. And ſome perhaps would be apt to think them ſuch as without which it would hardly be thought worthy of reception (eſpecially as a New Inſtitution) even with the help of Miracles, which Men are alwayes ready, and not without reaſon, to ſuſpect, when the Matters for whoſe ſake they are wrought bear not ſufficient Proportion to them. Which they would alſo perhaps be inclined to think to be the preſent Caſe. For what (would they ſay) is there in the Chriſtian Religion that deſerves ſo great ado, what that ſhould ingage an Omnipotent Arm to introduce it into the World, by ſuch mighty Signs and Wonders,

ders, if there be indeed nothing *Wonderful* in it, that is, if you take away its Myſteries. What cannot a good Syſtem of Morality (eſpecially if only a Second, and a little more Correct Edition of a Former) be Communicated to the World without Alarming Heaven and Earth, and giving diſturbance to the Courſe of Nature? And if Chriſtianity be no More, what Proportion (ſay they) will it bear to its Miraculous Introduction? And what will it be found to have ſo very Conſiderable as either to deſerve or juſtifie ſuch an *Apparatus*? It muſt indeed be allow'd by all to be a good wholſom Inſtitution for the Direction of Manners, but what is there ſo very Great and Admirable in it, what that either deſerves or anſwers to ſo many Types and Figures and Prophetical Predictions, what that ſo Copiouſly ſets forth the Manifold Wiſdom of God, and the Glory of his Attributes, and the Nothingneſs of the Creature, and where are thoſe *Deep things of God*, that Eye hath not ſeen nor Ear heard, nor have

enter'd

1 Cor. 2. 9, 10. enter'd into the Heart of Man (a place which the Apoſtle applies out of the Prophet *Iſaiah* to the Revelations of the Goſpel) where I ſay are thoſe profound things which the Spirit of God only that *Searches all things* could reveal, and which even now they are Reveal'd

1 Pet. 1. 12. *the Angels deſire to look into.* You'l hardly find any thing of ſo rais'd a Character in Chriſtianity if you deveſt it of its Myſteries, which therefore may juſtly be reckon'd as the Main Pillars of it, without which it will have much ado to ſupport it ſelf. So that in ſhort *Chriſtianity Not Myſterious* (how fond ſoever a Certain Author is of ſuch a Religion) will make but a very little Figure in Proportion to its Pomp and External Splendor, and indeed will almoſt dwindle down into Nothing.

15. It may indeed even without the Myſteries make a ſhift to ſubſiſt as a mere Syſtem of Precepts, and Rule of Life, though even thus Conſider'd it will be greatly impair'd and ſuffer much diſadvantage

tage (as wanting thoſe Convincing Demonſtrations of God's hatred of Sin, and of his Love towards Mankind, and withal thoſe indearing and perſwaſive Arguments for their returns of Love, Gratitude and Obedience towards him, which can only be deriv'd from the Redemption of the World by the Death and Satisfaction of its Divine Undertaker) but as a Covenant of Grace eſtabliſh'd betwixt God and his Offending and Eſtranged Creature it cannot poſſibly ſtand, but muſt fall to the ground. So that though the Moral or *Legal* part (as I may call it) of Chriſtianity may at a hard rate Continue after the downfall of its Myſteries, yet its *Federal* part, and all that is properly *Goſpel* in it muſt needs be involv'd in the Ruin and Fall with them, that being all built upon the *Satisfaction* of Chriſt, as that again upon his *Divinity*, which is therefore the very Foundation of the Chriſtian Religion, as *M. Abbadie* has by Variety of Demonſtration proved it to be. If then you would have

have that Divine Inſtitution ſtand, and if you would ſtand faſt in it (both which I am willing to ſuppoſe) have a care how you remove its Myſteries, Conſidering how Fundamental they are to the Building, and how great a ſhare of its Sacred Weight reſts upon them. But endeavour rather to remove your own Prejudices, to Mortifie your Underſtandings, to ſtudy Humility, and to reſtrain the too free Sallies of your too curious and over venturous Reaſon by ſtill and ſilent Reflections upon God's Infinite Greatneſs, and your own almoſt as great Infirmities, by which one Thought well purſued you will (by the Grace of God) come to a better Underſtanding of your ſelves than to reject any of his plain Revelations merely becauſe you cannot Conceive them, and ſo leaving Light and Viſion to the other Life, will be Content with other good Chriſtians humbly to *Believe* and *Adore* in this.

16. *Gen-*

16. *Gentlemen*, I beſeech you ſeriouſly to Conſider what with Chriſtian Charity and all due Civil Reſpect I have here laid before you, and if upon Conſideration of it you find any weight in it, to let it have its full Force and Effect upon you. Which if you do I hope it may ſerve by the Bleſſing of God (to whom for that end I humbly devote this Labour) to Convince you, or at leaſt to put you upon ſuch better Conſiderations of your own as May. For I pretend not here to have ſaid all, but to have left many things to the inlargement and improvement of your own Meditation, Conſidering the impropriety of doing otherwiſe to Perſons of your Parts and Learning, which I pray God to Sanctifie and Increaſe to you. Whereby you may perceive that I am not againſt your making uſe of your Reaſon. No, I would only have you reaſon rightly, and that you may do ſo would have you by all Human Methods to improve and Cultivate your Reaſon as much as you can, being well perſwaded that as a half-view of things

makes men Opiniative, Diſputatious and Dogmatical, ſo a Clear and thorough Light makes them Humble and diſtruſtful of themſelves, and that the more Cultivated and Improved any Man's Natural Reaſon is, the eaſier it will be for him to Captivate it to the *Obedience of Faith.*

POST-

POST-SCRIPT.

SInce the Committing of theſe Papers to the Preſs I have had the pleaſure to peruſe Mr. *Whiſton*'s New Theory of the Earth, for which extraordinary and truly great Performance I return him all due Thanks, and am very glad to ſee ſo great a Maſter of Reaſon and Philoſophy expreſs ſo awful and reverential a regard to Religion in general, and in particular to the Sacred *Myſteries* of it, againſt which both Human Reaſon and Natural Philoſophy have been of late ſo abuſively and profanely imploy'd. How far this Ingenious and Learned Author makes good his great undertaking, or whether this or the

Former *Theoriſt* be moſt likely to be in the right. I ſhall not take upon me to examin. I only make this Obſervation from both their wonderful Attempts that whether they are in the right or no, as to their reſpective Accounts of things, yet they have at leaſt gone ſo far and offer'd ſo fairly towards a true Explanation of them, as to Convince any Competent and indifferent Reader that the *Moſaick* Records concerning the greater *Phenomena* of Creation and Providence are not really of ſo deſperate a Nature as they were once preſumed to be, but are in themſelves Capable of, and may perhaps in time actually have (if they have not already) a true natural Solution. As for Inſtance, a Univerſal Flood without a Miracle, or that the World ſhould be wholly Drown'd in a Natural way, or according to the Laws of Motion already ſettled, and by a Train of Cauſes already laid in Nature, has been hitherto thought an Incomprehenſible, and accordingly an Impoſſible thing. But

now

now if these two Mighty *Genius*'s who have undertaken to give a Natural Account of this stupendous Revolution have neither of them pitch'd upon the very precise way and Manner whereby it was brought to pass, yet I think it cannot be denied but that they have said enough between them to Convince that the thing was naturally Possible, and that a true Natural Account may be given of it, though they should be supposed not to have hit directly upon that which is so. That is, I mean, they have represented it at least as a Conceivable thing, whether they themselves have had the good fortune to Conceive of it exactly as it was or no. Upon which it is very Natural and no less pertinent to the Concern in hand to make this further Reflexion, that we should not be Overhasty to pronounce any thing (even of a *Physical*, much less of a *Religious* Nature) to be Impossible, only because it appears to us to be Incomprehensible. For besides that the Incomprehensibility of a thing is (as this

whole Diſcourſe ſhews) no certain Argument of its Impoſſibility, and that what appears incomprehenſible to *our* Underſtandings may at the ſame time be well Comprehended by thoſe of Angels, not to ſay of wiſer Men, perhaps that which appears to us at preſent to be above all Comprehenſion may in proceſs of time and upon further Reflexion and Experience ſo brighten and clear up to our Minds, as to be Comprehended, or at leaſt to be thought of a Comprehenſible and Poſſible Nature even by our more improved ſelves. For the Incomprehenſibility of a thing as ſuch being no Abſolute Affection or Intrinſic Denomination of the thing it ſelf from its own Nature, but only ſuch as affects it from without and in relation to the preſent Capacity of our Underſtandings, there needs no alteration in the Nature of the thing to make that Comprehenſible which was before incomprehenſible, a Change in our Underſtandings is ſufficient, upon whoſe greater improvement alone an incomprehenſible may become a Com-

Comprehenſible Object. So that beſides the Nullity of the Conſequence from the Incomprehenſibility of a thing to its Impoſſibility, even the Principle it ſelf from which that Conſequence is pretended to be drawn may be remov'd, by the preſent Comprehenſion of what paſs'd before with us for an incomprehenſible Propoſition. Upon both which Conſiderations we are admoniſh'd to be very Cautious how we Conclude any thing in Nature, much more in Scripture, to be impoſſible, becauſe to us incomprehenſible. And 'tis the very uſe Mr. *Whiſton* himſelf makes of the latter of them in the Concluſion of his excellent Work, from which I think it worth while to tranſcribe a Paſſage both for the Advantage of the preſent Argument, and the greater Conviction of the Reader, to whom, as well as to my ſelf, it muſt be no little Satisfaction to ſee the Sentiments of ſo great an Author concur with mine.

The Meaſure of our preſent knowledge (ſays he) *ought not to be eſteem'd* p. 379.

the Criterion or Test of Truth (the very Proposition almost in Terms of my Fourth Chapter) *or to be opposed to the Accounts receiv'd from profane Antiquity, much less to the inspired writings. For notwithstanding that several particulars relating to the eldest Condition of the World and its great Catastrophe's, examin'd and compared with so much Philosophy as was till lately known, were plainly unaccountable, and, naturally speaking, impossible; yet we see now Nature is more fully, more certainly, and more substantially understood, that the same things approve themselves to be plain, easie, and rational. 'Tis therefore Folly in the highest degree to reject the Truth or Divine Authority of the Holy Scriptures because we cannot give our Minds particular satisfaction as to the Manner, nay or even possibility of some things therein asserted. Since we have seen so many of those things, which seem'd the most incredible in the whole Bible, and gave the greatest Scruple and Scandal to Philosophic Minds, so fully and particularly attested, and next to demonstrated from Certain Princi-*

ples

ples of Aſtronomy and natural Knowledge; 'tis but reaſonable to expect in due time a like Solution of the other Difficulties. 'Tis but juſt ſure to depend upon the Veracity of thoſe Holy VVriters in other Aſſertions, whoſe Fidelity is ſo intirely eſtabliſh'd in theſe hitherto equally unaccountable ones. The obvious, plain, or literal Senſe of the Sacred Scriptures ought not without great reaſon to be eluded or laid aſide: Several of thoſe very places which ſeem'd very much to require the ſame hitherto, appearing now to the Minuteſt Circumſtances, true and rational, according to the ſtricteſt and moſt literal Interpretation of them. VVe may be under an Obligation to believe ſuch things on the Authority of the Holy Scriptures as are properly Myſteries; that is, though not really Contradictory, yet plainly unaccountable to our (preſent degree of) Knowledge and Reaſon. Thus the Sacred Hiſtories of the Original Conſtitution, and great Cataſtrophe's of the VVorld have been in the paſt Ages the Objects of the Faith of Jews and Chriſtians, though the Divine Providence had not afforded ſo much light as

that

that they could otherwiſe Satisfie themſelves in the Credibility of them, till the new improvements in Philoſophy. And this is but juſt and Reaſonable. For ſure the Ignorance or Incapacity of the Creature does by no Means afford ſufficient ground for Incredulity, or juſtifie Men in their rejecting Divine Revelation, and impeaching the Veracity or Providence of the Creator. With which weighty, and to the preſent purpoſe very pertinent words of this worthy Author I Seal up my own, and leave them both to the Conſideration of the Reader.

FINIS.

Corrections.

PAge 176. line 22. after *describe* read its. p. 250. l. 11. r. confuted. p. 206. l. 17. after *Perfections*, r. are as. p. 273. l. 1. r. proceeds. p. 287. l. 12. for *as his Vicar does*, r. whatever his Vicar may do. p. 289. l. 23. after *or*, r. as. p. 292. l. 9. r. Scrutiny. p. 303. l. 17. r. Chriſtian.

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